

THE AUTHOR
A Hollywood Portrait

I LEFT ENGLAND

t

by

ALASDAIR T. A. LOCH

THE TRAVEL BOOK CLUB

111 CHARING CROSS ROAD LONDON W.C.2

First published in 1939

TO
MY MOTHER
AND
THE FUTURE
OF
THE REPUBLIC OF ECUADOR

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CHAPTER I

"A CABLE for you—from New York"

The coloured official "delivery folders" of reputable organizations peddling dots and dashes have odd receptions

I have seen polar apprehensions freeze faces and "shaking" hip-flasks subsequently victimized I have supported swooning addressees, and have seen innocent telegraphic missives evacuate matronly householders I have seen delivered cables avoided for twenty four hours—

But to people like myself, 'transmitted communications' do more for the liver than the sting of any aggressive grapefruit And so, to the distress of certain of my economic relatives, they have become part of my life

The idea of a letter loitering in a street-corner box (next clearance 11 10 a m Monday) inevitably assumes disturbing proportions in my mind It becomes an anathema—an irritant—a lingering pain in the neck—

Consequently, when it is convenient to my circumstances, I send telegrams, cables, radiograms, and receive them—though less occasionally

So that, "Zajtrk je gotov," or "I have drawn your bath," from the plump little, occasionally English speaking Slovene maid, would have given me far more concern than "A cable . . ."

I slowly unfolded the Jugoslav telegraph form and struggled with the hesitant pencilled guess work of the Balkan postmistress Then it suddenly dawned on me that I was being invited to rise from my bed and accompany an expedition—

Part of the deciphered message read "Have reserved berth for you on Grace Liner sailing Ecuador August tenth . . . delighted if you would join our party. Awaiting reply . . ."

I had, of course, known about the expedition. In fact I had written suggesting, more as a capricious afterthought than not, that it might include me.

Having done so, I had thought no more about it and had left England for a holiday amongst the mountains of Central Europe.

And now as I lay between sheets and watched this neatly capped, bright faced little girl carefully pull up the shutters, as I watched her draw the curtains and let in the rays of the morning sun, as I listened to the three-piece gipsy orchestra playing for a tip below my window, I realized with a minimum of mental digression that within ten days I'd be "strollin' down Broadway."

Yet I was superciliously amused. The cabled itioery dramatically breathed of "wild Indians" and "Inca treasure."

References to "that green hell", or such news headings as "Another expedition sails for Cocos" have usually encouraged me to smile knowingly to myself.

But in common with many people and the proverbial cat—I have at one time or another fallen foul of that overwhelming affliction which links chimpanzees to gramophone needles and unsuspecting males to matrimony—that complete urge which incites us to try anything once and which in this case was to lead me through the Panama Canal—

Curiosity!

I was curious to know about the real South America. What possible mental jig saw, I wondered, could ever be conjured by the Londoner, strap-hanging in the warmth of a lighted tube, and superficially glancing twice daily at Reuter? What sort of Latin "Merry Go-Round" could ever be pictured, for instance, in the sanctuary of an English garden?

Personal experiences vary so considerably that I had no definite idea. But I concluded that the scenes which we individually envisioned were not always very accurate, and sometimes entirely wrong. I was not very happy about my own conceptions, which amounted to a blurred composite of Chaco wars, fandangos, and lost explorers.

Apart from the fact that I had once seen in England a film

depicting head-shrinking Indians of the Upper Amazon, which had been made—in partnership with a British Commander—by the leader of this forthcoming expedition to Ecuador, my knowledge of South American geography was very limited.

The “British Commander” had led the first expedition in search of Colonel Fawcett, to Matto Grosso territory. This part of South America I had once found on the map. Yet until I procured an atlas, after receiving the cabled invitation, I could not have put my finger on a section of the great southern continent, saying “That’s Ecuador”

But a little common reasoning, and my professed interest in the Spanish language, should have suggested the translation—Equator

Subsequent investigation showed me that Ecuador lay on the western side of the continent—that the Andes split it vertically into two unequal parts—and that it was bounded by the Pacific.

Since my return to Europe, I have often held in wonder the discrepancies of my original information on so colourful a continent. Yet, I frequently find the same paucity of accurate conception in others.

It was with this in mind—despite the many interesting accounts of travel in North and South America by clever authors—that I decided to record this narrative.

Surprisingly enough, that great but uncertain manipulator of fact—Hollywood—has not yet dealt to any great extent with this continent south of the Panama Canal.

However, some of those Amazonian and even American fantasies that it has produced, leave personal experience as the one reliable medium to a true sense of value in these things.

This forthcoming trip meant that I should also visit the United States. Within my reach was an opportunity to discover first hand exactly how distorted these Hollywood portrayals had been. But it meant immediate action.

The cabled phrase “Sailing Ecuador August tenth” constituted an ultimatum. I was already over a thousand

I LEFT ENGLAND

smiles from London, with New York another odd three thousand farther on. It might be reached within the time limit if I could connect with an express liner . . .

With varied feelings I swept the "Shipping" of a five-days-old *Times*. It appeared that all the fast vessels had either sailed or were unlisted.

No . . . the *Manhattan* . . . seven days . . . due to leave Southampton on August 1st . . .

This just made it possible. A long journey lay ahead—

Activity . . . cabled acceptance . . . a suitcase lid biting on carelessly packed clothes . . . *auf wiedersehen* . . .

An hour or two later, *en route* to England, I motored across the Jugoslavian frontier into Austria

"Breathing fire . . . belching steam . . . the Dover train slid smoothly into Victoria . . . doors swinging . . . disgorged its human cargo on to a platform"

Some years ago in a thriller I remember reading of something like this

In my case the "disgorging" seemed interminable. Only too conscious that the *Manhattan* was to sail next day, I held the listed items of my immediate itinerary in one hand—

'Phone American Consulate for emergency visa—ring United States Lines to inquire about berth—visit bank in City to arrange transfer—see doctor for health certificate—vaccination for smallpox—inoculation for typhoid—dine with Aunt Beattie at seven forty five—

The train ceased "sliding" . . . a last glance at the list before stuffing it into a pocket . . . directions to a porter

a deadline for the telephones . . . imprecations at finding each one engaged . . .

These "glass boxed" callers staring vacantly at me and animatedly mouthing—could their need possibly be any greater than mine? Why couldn't they appreciate the urgency of my grimace and humanly replace their receivers on the hook—?

An expensive thing of beauty searching too placidly for a number—why *in* the box when "directories" hung outside? That City man—impeccably dressed—his umbrella stick (this

hot July) swinging on button "A"—one bored hand supporting the receiver near his shoulder—an *Evening News* rolled readably in the other. Could the importance of his trunk-call eclipse those "locals" that I strained to make—?

My mind refused to telepathize or if it was broadcasting, no one heeded the call. I paced in small circles by the boxes barely curbing the temptation to rap on their glass—

A Continental looking female spelling out the "directions", would she finally experiment or bewilderedly leave the box?

Damn these peop—thank Himmel for that! The rattle of a "'phone-kiosk" folding door—the black Derby'd caller was departing in disgust

That "breath pinning" mustiness which haunts most station 'phones—stale tobacco—tenacious perfume—lethal in every respect

"Chester is waiting for you—go ahead please"

The only Chester whom I knew was Chester Edwards, mining in Africa. I had given him that name myself having found it in Eddie Cantor's film *W'hooper*. It had clung to him—

Valuable moments wasted in being told that Chester wanted me (Oh, Chester!) and over my subsequent explanation that I hadn't called the town

Replacing the receiver I tapped my foot impatiently on the floor and waited a minute that seemed like ten, to be sure that I had lost Chester. Then I dialled a Laogham number—

"American Consulate General"

"My name is Loch—how can I obtain a visa so that I can sail for the States to-morrow?"

"You will need a letter of introduction from your banker, your solicitor, or your firm, explaining your financial situation—the purpose of your visit—and the duration of your stay in America. Then, provided your passport is already endorsed for travel to the United States, a visa will be granted—"

"Where are you?"

"In Cavendish Square. We open at nine a.m. If you come along then . . ."

"Thank you."

"You're welcome."

As the following evening gave its cue to the Battersea Power Plants, Colles Crotty and I rolled up to Waterloo. Colles, then "at Oxford", had been with me in Australia. . . .

"*S.S. Manhattan?*" inquired a voice in the world outside the car.

An undersized porter was heaving at my trunk—struggling over what should have been a two-man job—

"Are both you gentlemen sailing?" as he looked unsuccessfully for further luggage. "Only you, sir?" nodding to me. "Platform 13. Your trunk will be put on the ship."

Then as his two-wheeler trolley supported its disheartening weight: "Thank you, sir—you won't need me again—"

Colles and I explored for Platform 13. It was crowded as we passed by each carriage of the boat-train. Even if only one in six of these people were to be passengers, it seemed that the ship must be popular.

We tracked down that "Reserved Seat" and, having done so, I decided to label its qualification more obtrusively, before stepping back to the platform. Normally I put my hat on the carriage seat if I am wearing one.

But to-day I was not.

All right then, my newspaper—

But I'd left it in the car.

Well then, my coat—

Suddenly that sensation of iced water being poured into my stomach.

My sub-zero armour, with which I had intended the snow-clad Andes to mean so little, had somehow vanished into a Jasper Maskelyne world—

"Where the something-or-other is my coat?" I thrust at the luckless Colles, with visions of a pet razor and imaginary fivers which I might have stuffed hurriedly into its pockets.

"I . . . with *your* coat?" he replied, good-humouredly pointing out my own carelessness.

My face lost its usual friend-to-children expression—

"Hell alone knows what I've left in it. Usually the last and most important things."

And so Colles went back to challenge time. It was an impossible race . . .

To overcome my disgust I returned to the platform to survey all these probable passengers. There were faces that I recognized, amongst these chattering, gesticulating people—of the theatre—of the sports world—of London society so-called—

News photographers loitered further towards the engine. One or two of them leant against a four wheeled luggage trolley. The majority skirted the gathering around a red haired lanky youth, freckled and "camel hair" coated—

Budge was returning to America. Perry and his wife, Helen Vinson, were there to see him away.

Slinking autograph hunters swept hawk-eyes from face to face. Parting friends handed special pleasantries. I ruminated as to how long they could buoy these sentiments if the train refused to leave.

Finally, the dead line came and the boat train drew away—

Corridors remained crowded—people struggled to lean out and wave. Cupped hands broadcast unrestrained last counsels—screwed up "Late Extras" flagged *au revoir*—

The platform receded.

Then with Waterloo behind us and these animated communications no longer possible, passages began to clear and the philosophic filed resignedly to their seats.

With the dusk curtaining those "eye-sore" backyards, which are usually the last an American sees of London, we rattled towards Southampton where a primed *Manhattan* marked time.

"Well, it's a grand old town—"

"Me for next summer—"

"Oh no—not after those Bond Street headaches—"

"Why, you old meanie, you. You know I econ—"

An effervescent American matron overflowed to the couple, with whom she was obviously "travelling".

"That Ivor Novello—so clever—so refined And that Old Vic The-ater—I just *had* to go again "

The undergraduette travelling home with mother animatedly joined the conversation

"Did you take that tour to Stratford—I'm just crazy about Anne Hath-away's garden—all that colour And her *bed*—just the cutest thing . . . can you imagine, the daughter had to creep *through* the mother's room—"

"The idea—you speaking that way, Laura Leigh Let me tell you, young lady, these roadhouse parties back home . . ."

"Aw, Mom, you *wouldn't* . . ."

The grey-haired woman next to me sitting quietly by the window shook her head to my query about the draught

"No, suh," she volunteered in lazy tones, "even on a rail track A' can inhale this good old country. A' surely hate to leave these little lanes that lead to such funny thatched villages "

"Did you manage to see much of England?" I asked her, as her languid praises continued, covering phases of English life

"Well, suh, A' certainly did try m'best in those two weeks to see just all a visitor should see—"

"Then you visited the Tower?"

"Land sakes, yes suh Wind sor Castle, Eton College, Hampton Court, Canterbury And of course Westminster and the Changing of the Guard "

"Splendid, but you spoke of the English countryside as though you had been further afield . . ."

"Yes, suh, my sister here" (drawled introduction to a slightly younger edition) "hired a small automobile and we drove to Clovelly village "

"Not . . . North Devon?"

"Yes, suh, in Devon shire"

"All in two weeks?"

"Well, suh, we didn't stay We drove to Loch Lomond . . ."

"You what? As well? But that's in Scot— You visited Edinburgh?"

"We certainly di— What did you call it?"

"Edinburgh The Castle . . . Mary Queen of Scots . . ."

"Edin-bur-er?"

"Yes."

"Well, can you imagine . . . we called it Ed in berg, like Pittsburgh back in America."

"Do you find that pronunciation here differs very much from your own?"

"Why yes, suh, there certainly are some words. For instance, the other day in a store—what was that word, Caroline?"

"A loom-in um."

"Yes, that was it, a loom in um. You say—?"

"Aluminium."

She repeated it slowly. "Well, suh, it sounded mighty funny to us. Words like 'thor-ough-ly', 'cer-emo-ny', Bum-
ming-ham'—you English slur them so quickly. Now A' lived in Birmingham forty years—"

"Birmingham, Alabama?"

"That's the town, 'nd A'd never heard it called anything but Birmingham."

"And your home—now?"

"Heart of America. When it's hot why there isn't any place hotter . . . when it's cold . . . why Kansas City is literally the coldest town."

"Kansas City—and you miss the South?"

"We certainly do, yet we like it where we are. Realtors' agents just go on talking about our residential districts. They claim it's a model for the rest of America."

"What else would interest me if I were to Kansas City?"

"Well, suh, the great stockyards—"

"Stockyards?" It seemed odd that a woman should recommend such an attraction. And somehow when I thought of Kansas City I automatically envisioned all the drawbacks of American civilization . . . hardy cattle . . . I'd like to see them. . . ."

"Why, suh, A' don't know how those people could get along without those stockyards. You will certainly want to see them."

"Will I—?" Then to soften the blow, "I have lived so much amongst them in Australia—"

"You *have*—you are Australian?"

"Not exactly, although I would like to think so. Some of my best years have been spent in Australia."

"Yes, suh, A've beard tell it's a mighty fine country. A lot of Americans go there now."

The young husband opposite to me was listening attentively. He looked at his wife.

"Australia," he echoed, "we've been there, haven't we, honey?"

He turned to me again. "Right after our marriage we went hell bent for Honolulu, but the trip seemed too short. . . . there were nice people aboard we just carried right on. We knew we could see Hawaii on the way back. The Australians certainly gave us a wonderful time."

We discussed places that we both knew and I asked him about his home.

"Santa Barbara, California . . . quiet little town . . . just far enough away from my business in Los Angeles."

This was an interesting coincidence. The *SS Santa Barbara* was to take me south from New York. I mentioned this.

"Grace Line . . . huh . . . to Ecuador? Smart ships, their star liners do the California run . . . saloons staffed with women and Chinks—"

"Their—what—?"

"Chinks in the bars—American stewardesses waiting at table—pretty too—"

His wife broke in "Oh, so they are?" He ignored the interruption.

"So you'll see Panama. The way those Army hoys have fixed things down there . . . when an American sees that Canal Zone he feels good."

"The way you said you felt in Paris?" His wife had turned conversationalist.

It appeared that besides England they had also done the Continent. Her naive remarks recalled excitedly the Lido at Venice, and included Buda and Pest in a way that a child of Mayfair might describe a journey to a Maidenhead Club.

An alert American with greying temples who had also been

seeing Europe recounted his adventures to the rest of the compartment.

As I looked out into the darkness and listened to the familiar "diddley-dop" of the wheels over sleepers, I could sense it gradually giving way to a quieter motion. Lights appeared ahead and our speed was decreasing.

Five minutes later the train was edging round the docks. "There she is—that's her," as we approached an illuminated monster.

"And all American?"

"How about this new Cunarder?" a fair voice demanded.

"We'll build one bigger and better, trust America—"

A line of white-coated, peak-capped stewards stretched smartly along the platform.

Past difficulties seemed to fade away altogether. Here awaiting my pleasure was the lighted sea-castle which had been my goal for what had seemed an infinite length of time, in actual fact two days.

Expectancy overwhelmed me. I repressed with all available self-control barbarian instincts to "war whoop." My mind was rampant as I looked at the round shafts of light in the darkness, beyond the barriers, which was the *Manhattan*. America lay ahead. Anything, I considered, could happen now—

"Passports. . . would you step to one side, please." And I stood watching the other passengers file on board.

At last, except for a few officials and a seaman or two, I appeared to be alone on the dock.

"Now, Mr. Loch, you obtained a ticket only this afternoon."

"Correct."

"Why do you want to go to America?"

"What again—?"

After the cross-questioning that I had undergone to achieve my visa in London this seemed unnecessary repetition. Half an hour later, I could quite appreciate the need for a double check on ports. But at the time a child might as well have been asked why it wanted to see Tom Mix or to have that pink bull's-eye.

For a moment in my disgust I sought some verbal stiletto, but I remembered the proverb about fewer flies being caught with vinegar

"I expect to be in the United States only two days I am joining an expedition sailing to South America "

"How much money have you?"

At any previous period in my life this question might have touched a very sore point, but now I felt that I could submit my reply with assurance

"One hundred pounds with me in American Express Cheques a few dollars my bank is making a substantial transfer to New York "

I mentioned the sum, it seemed attractive enough to me

"I'm afraid that won't do "

I counted slowly to ten, then looked at my watch in annoyance The ship was already due to sail.

What status had this hatless fellow dressed in everyday clothes, who aimed these questions at me? No, that was ridiculous reasoning, obviously it was his job. Looking at the gangway, the temptation to brush by and continue further arguments on deck was extremely difficult to suppress Surely those dockers were preparing to take it away

A conference was taking place between my "inquisitionist" and another I chewed my lip with annoyance and wished them both to the nearest inferno Hadn't others ever made last minute bookings? What then, are these stories of film stars chartering speed boats to pursue liners down Southampton water ?

The conversationalists nodded perceptibly in my direction. I had now reached that pitch of up-in-the-air resignation which a defendant must experience when the 'twelve good men' file back

"Will you fill up this form?"

Seizing the offered pen, I dashed off information as to my next of kin my peculiarities (I left this blank) whether I advocated the overthrow of a Government by force Such damfool questions I told myself, was there to be no limit to their absurdity?

The docks shuddered under a terrific blast—the *Manhattan* was notifying all and sundry of her immediate intentions.

Completing the form, I was allowed to embark with both hands full of documents . . . into a small world, that might have been *America*. . . .

CHAPTER II

ON a voyage, even of a mere week, it is important that there should be other amusements than eating, sleeping and star-gazing

And the United States Lines manage to find a diversion for every moment

Fresh summer sea air circulating pleasantly round a cabin does something to you. It either adds another somnolent hour to a peaceful reverie, commits the passenger to a cold, or makes him feel like a spring chicken. I never go out of my way to identify myself with live stock, but on any morning at sea I'm an early bird. So that having put one night on the Atlantic Ocean under my belt, I ignored the steward's "apple and tea" and set out to catch the worm, or rather in this case, the gymnasium.

Hampton Court's maze and I have never yet "had the pleasure", which fact was brought home to me as I padded my canvas shoes along corridors, down stairways, and through safety doors, all the time trying to get somewhere. Finally after one vicious circle, I began again until eventually echoes of splashing came galloping past my ears.

Ha, so others were also out to pounce on that morning worm. Yes, a pre-breakfast dip was a pleasant thought, it had apparently occurred to many.

Somewhere ahead of me were the raised voices of watery eared swimmers and I stumbled over the ledges of safety doors until I was on the scene.

Only in the hanging room of a mass butchery have I been privileged to view such a variety of carcasses as dropped into that azure pool. One by one they fell on top of each other from beneath a notice prohibiting diving, whilst others clung in spray below the head of a gargoyle from which sea water cascaded.

The "room", large and airy, was electric with 'oomph' Slashing table tennis was being played to one side of the bathers and ping pong balls dropped often in the water, slowly heaving to the Atlantic swell outside I felt pretty good, for everyone looked cheerful

Continental and American voices flung banter about the bath with a familiarity which offered evidence that these people had embarked at Hamburg

Very reluctantly I had to turn away from this vital atmosphere for, with a day-old vaccination making a barbecue of my arm, this fun was not for me

Across the passage and through another open door some one was energetically getting nowhere on an exercise bicycle So even in the "gym", I was not the early bird Who then were these "pistol beaters" who had been first off the mark?

A well built fellow, snorting like a horse, punished the punch bag with professionally timed consistency Walter Neusel was keeping batde form for America His flaxen haired trainer, a slightly built man, leant against a mechanical horse, clock in hand, watching the "work-out" like a hawk

Outside the gymnasium Neusel undermined my ideas concerning championship training, by "chain smoking" cigars

I played with him one evening at some "dog racing" competitions Very genial, always smiling, his friendly enthusiasm at another's win illuminated his agreeable nature

"What number have you?" he would ask before a race "I have five—do you think it has a chance?"

He had recently fought Petersen at the Albert Hall, and mere shipboard hearsay claimed that he was heading for Joe Louis The "Brown Bomber" had not then reached his present position

"Why, that guy Louis is a killer," commented my cabin companion

To many passengers the prerogative of choosing a table, or stable-mate, is one of the high spots of the voyage But this is where I am usually sold a pup

Only twice have I been pinched by stewards into harmonious meal time "bases" and these two winners (on voyages to and

from West Africa) were the direct result of my taking no steps to choose where I should sit

The less fortunate occasions still skirmish at the back of my mind when I think of the sea

There had been that soup swilling halitosist, amusing to begin with, but whose bathplug behaviour and pole-cat exhalations on an England Egypt voyage caused jitters among the women at our table. And jittering women—

Then that affluent but less pleasant individual homing it from Singapore, who had so graphically detailed his achievements at deck spottis and in the same breath disparaged those of others

And again that other mutton-chop John Bull on the same Malayan voyage who used to cool his soup by pouring in beer, not just a spoonful but half a pint at a time—who would 'dunk' jammy or gorgonzola rolls in his coffee, munching at the sodden mess with the leaking steam wending its way round and down his neck

All little things. But, somehow, after the first five performances you find yourself waiting tensely for them to occur. Anyhow, on the *Manhattan*, I decided to leave these things to chance

The steward, a ruggedly individual American, showed me to a vacant six place table. I wondered about the other five chairs. Would my catch be a set of wise-cracking Wheelers and Woolseys? Would I be landed with seven days of affection in my good ear as had been the case on a P & O trip to Marseilles?

With the grape fruit, two of my future table-companions produced themselves—father and son—and were seated at my immediate left. The father—I afterwards discovered him to be a Brook Street specialist—was of medium build, a very slight suggestion of Otto Kruger. From the son, emanated more than a flavouring of Freddie Bartholomew. Automatically, as we nodded to each other, I placed them as English, one hundred per cent, I decided. I learnt that they were, in fact, American, of Dutch extraction, from Chicago.

We exchanged destinations. This doctor, who practised in England, had called his offspring over to an English public

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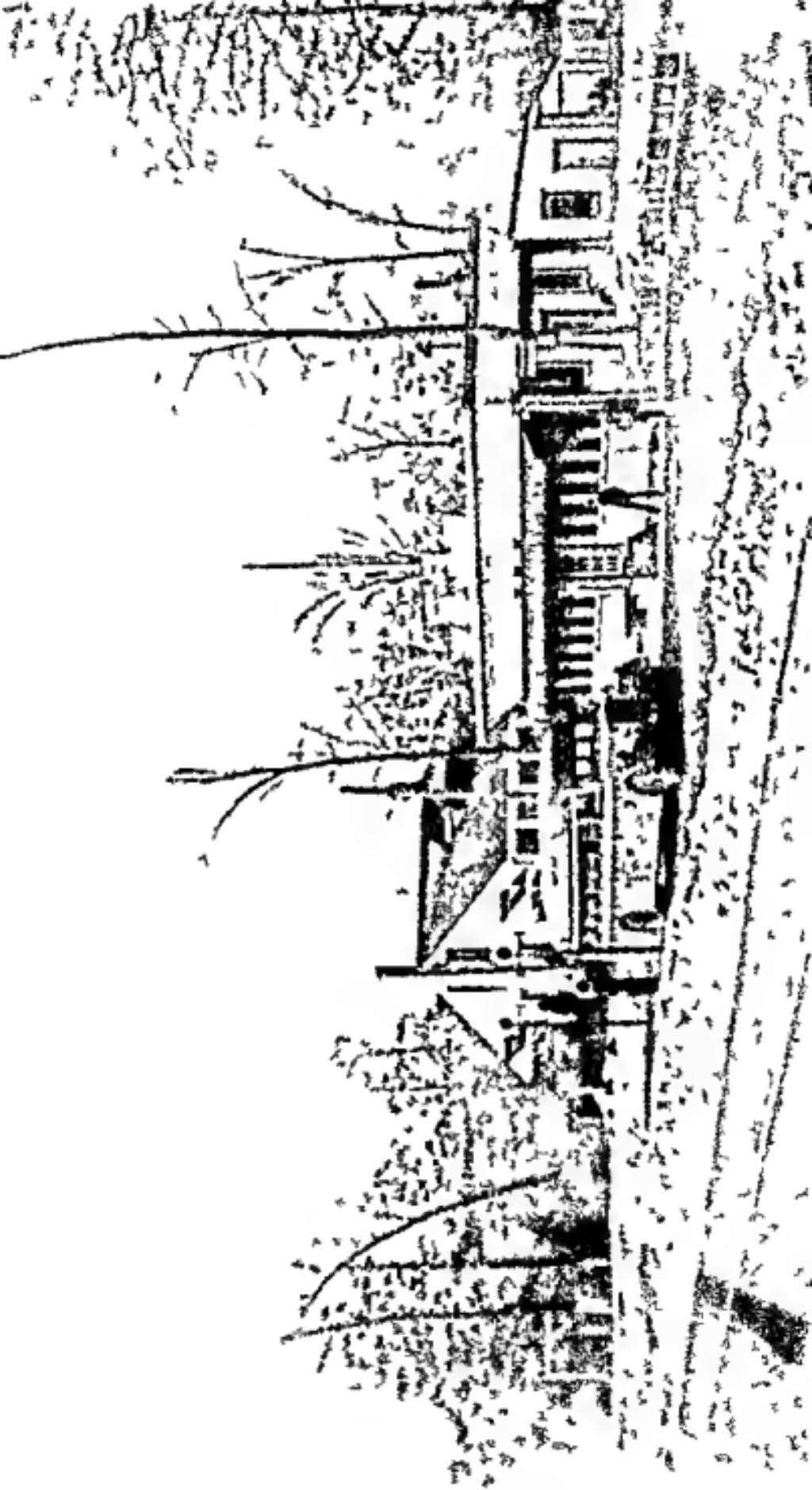
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school. Three years he assured me had brought about something which he intended the Chicago family to appreciate for themselves. And so, this trip.

Then as the innkeeper took their attention, I noticed something in green unobtrusively slip into another of the chairs. For three or four meals she was mute except when whispering her order to the steward. Then under the disarming attentions of the doctor, it came out. She was a nurse, Irish, and visiting her sister in New York. She was more tired than self-conscious, having just left behind her a nightmare of long hours, late-night "extra work" and relinquished week-end "free periods". To accumulate sufficient leave for the voyage she had also done overtime. Her working sessions had averaged twenty hours daily, always at somebody's beck and call. Her subsequent remarks drawn together penned a picture of not only long hours and near slavery, but with it all there had been poor food, lectures, compulsory prayers, and stupid restrictions. I didn't envy her. And the doctor agreed that English hospital conditions for nurses had not been what they might be.

There were times when this girl, a qualified nurse, had to scrub stone floors, polish windows and do chancery work, whilst patients called constantly from their beds.

And here she was, aboard an Atlantic liner, heading for a city where anything could happen, having temporarily cut away from this drudgery. But it was days before we learnt all this.

When she took her place at the table on that "first morning", and after fifteen minutes still gazed at her plate, mutelike and expressionless I felt oddly uncomfortable and awaited the next arrival with interest.

He was a Scot a Scot with a complex in fact two. They were California, and grapefruit.

When he spoke of one, he usually coupled the other.

"California," he told us, "grows the best in the world. Now take Indian River grapefruit is this 'Indian River'?"

The steward, a quick witted man, saw his cue.

That's 'Indian River' "

And so we learnt of Californian orchards, of Californian

committees by force—approved or threw out members of the State football teams—worshipped at his own shrine—

Why, yes, she understood that he did all these things, and more. . . .

"I guess we all kinda hate'm," was her comment.

The expression "Georgia Peach" I had begun to understand on that first morning at breakfast, but it was only whilst watching the dancing one evening that I really appreciated the full definition.

"She's from Georgia," somebody volunteered as a vision floated by. This glamorous creature appeared to have so few defects that I decided at once to dispense with the delay of any formal introduction.

When the music stopped, forgetting the puffed arm that I had pampered for five days, I rose to conquer.

Perhaps destiny stepped in, as I have occasionally found that it does, for with force enough to fell a buffalo a flustered matron cannoned from the dance floor into my thriving vaccination. In discomfort we flopped beside each other.

After that I didn't bother to "meet" the Georgia Peach. There would be more "peaches" in the "orchard", I felt, than had ever crossed to Europe, and nursing a very sore arm I gave up the chase.

But such beauty has never since crossed my path.

A doctor on the *Manhattan*, who gave me my second inoculation, stared hard at my three recent vaccination marks.

"Hm'm . . . very odd," he commented, as he looked at them strangely.

So I asked him to explain what was odd.

" . . . Why these English doctors give three infections. If it's going to 'take', one will be enough, and you undergo a third of the discomfort."

I liked the trim American uniform of his cheery Scottish nurse. The wardrobes of English hospitals, I decided, were so very far behind.

This bright little person spoke to me of America, of her sister whom she had brought over from Glasgow a year before.

"Has she settled in yet . . . does she never feel homesick for Scotland?"

"Settled in? Why she's completely American . . . loves the people . . . copies their ways . . ."

A similar case to this was an English girl on board who had married an American.

As we leant over the railings and studied the calm waters between Ambrose Lightship and New York, she admitted having given way to the pestering of her family. She had returned to England. . . .

"They were at Paddington to meet me. It was so nice to see them all, but . . ."

Otherwise she had hated every minute.

"After America people seemed so depressed—so restrained—so affected—so unhealthy—so dull . . ."

Kitchens and bathrooms had irritated her also.

"In America they are so spotless," she explained.

These unhappy reflections of her regretted visit to England sped away when I asked about her husband.

"Within twenty hours we'll be lunching together . . . no entreaties from the Old Country will ever . . ."

After breakfast one morning whilst I changed pounds for Uncle Sam's "greenbacks", before the usual run on the purser's office, a woman asked me the exact decimalized rate of exchange.

For a week the dollar had been "fluctuating" at the most a point either way.

I apologized for not knowing precisely.

"For pity's sake—changing your money and you haven't determined the rate?"

"Well roughly of course—"

"Mercy me, why I've never done that . . . always waited for the high figure . . . the inconvenience is nothing if I'm getting full value. . . ."

This was my first introduction to the United States business brain . . . no wonder so many American matrons could travel, I reflected.

Maceys, an immense New York cash-on-the-nail store ex-

hibits a big slogan to Americans. It is SMART TO BE THRIFTY runs the hoarding

There was that United States Naval Officer, homeward bound from the Philippines to San Diego, California.

I made the obvious comment about it seeming the longer way

"Most of us join the Navy to see the world," he commented, "but . . ."

At the time I hadn't heard the Fred Astaire song and its dreary conclusions

This officer had crossed to China . . . had "done" Saigon, Bangkok and Singapore

He had occupied hotel rooms in Sumatra and Ceylon . . . Bombay's Taj Mahal had also sheltered him

Then had come the inevitable Near-East triangle . . . Suez, the Sphinx and Mena House, then back to the ship at Port Said . . .

No, he hadn't seen Jerusalem, but his zig-zag path across Europe left my mouth rather widely ajar

But he had missed England apart from the doubtful spectacle of Southampton Docks

"Why?"

"Been there before," he explained, "for three days. Anchored in the Thames River at Til . . . Til . . . Til something

"Hired one of those London buggies," he continued, "then I really knew fear . . . a hell fire driver with whiskers floating about the gear-change drove on the wrong side . . . they all did . . . one night was enough I went to relations in Surrey . . ."

Why were English girls supposed to look awkward . . . have big feet? His cousins weren't that way . . . and they didn't "talk Cockney" . . .

He guessed America was just wrong again

Sauntering about the ship on the "last night before New York", I wandered along to the aft saloon and slumped into one of those all leather chairs

Beside me was a table. Then I noticed that somebody else shared it as well.

"Those are pretzels."

"I beg your pardon."

"Pretzels—were you looking at them?"

"Er—yes, possibly—occasionally my head is right up there," I confided to this plump young woman.

"Been balancing on my trunk," I continued, "and now that I've humbled it, I am wondering about that toothbrush and razor—."

"Are they big things in your life?"

"Left my first set behind in a coat," I elucidated, "must shave to-morrow."

America on half a beard, I ruminated—no it couldn't be done.

"Well, try a pretzel . . . mm hm—salty must drink something with them . . . uh huh, I like beer."

And on this lubricant we discussed the approaching metropolis of New York.

"I'm a stenographer there—but I live in New Jersey."

"Going home at week-ends?"

"Nope—every day."

"But New Jersey is a State."

"Surely . . . but just across the river."

Did I know anybody in New York? She would gladly show me "the Town" . . .

" . . . the Rainbow Room—Casino in the Park—the Astor Roof—Grant's Tomb—the Cotton Club—Harlem—."

"Try anything once," I offered with reservation, "but for some reason or another my concern in New York will be Ecuador, South America—flora—fauna—Indians and things—."

"Sounds thrilling," stifling a yawn.

"Hope you're right . . . and incidentally I have only about a day in the States—people to meet—equipment to buy . . . so I'm afraid the Rainbow Room and Harlem . . ."

"Sure—just thought you might be lonely . . ."

We wandered over to a "fruit machine"—the only vacant one—there were several in the saloon.

"We'll need a dime . . . yes, the small one . . . like your sixpence "

"Right "

She fed the voracious machine . . .

Grand fun—bad luck that time, try again—this handle takes some pulling—what, no jack pot?

"They're fixed," she shook the handle violently

We moved to another machine temporarily vacant

"Say, let's try again—I'll need some more dimes . . ."

Amusing game, I thought, helps to pass the time

We passed a great deal of it there

"You *haven't* any more?"

Having extracted change from the steward five times and handed what seemed to be my sixty seventh dime I began to take notice and review the situation

The dimes didn't worry me but this cold blooded feminine indifference did I was being played for a—what was that American expression?

"Change in my cabin—if you'd excuse me for a moment . . ."

I unsocially never meant to return

There is usually something strangely depressing and occasionally exciting about a last night aboard ship I suppose it can be summed up as "expectancy"

From the *Manhattan* we could mentally "smell" America approaching, chiefly through a conjured visualization of New York with its "scrapers", in fact through everything with which the English newspapers care to typify that modern world. There was that feeling which always envelops me on the "home-stretch" between the local bus stop and our "hearth"—

But this wasn't 'home', I had never been to New York. Yet, as with the majority of other English passengers, I had a rough but misguided idea as to what lay ahead, although our individual envisioning probably differed

We could all "see" the cluster of tall buildings, though many refused to entertain the suggestion that they were chiefly confined to the Wall Street district. A few saw the America to come through recollections of Empire State Building photographs and one die hard was genuinely "surprised" to hear

that the United States "possessed gardens" How the ears of those American passengers must have swelled

Everywhere on board ship an almost serious air of quiet expectancy overhung the passengers After a week's casual idling in the artificial life of this luxury liner, they seemed to be spiritually hardening themselves for a "battle" ahead—the Americans for a quick "getaway" to their "time squeezing" business back home—the Europeans preparing to launch themselves in pace with the tempo to come

But what tempo—?

The tempo of high powered taxi-cabs which, according to Hollywood, slashed their squealing tyres through American life—the tempo of fast talking salesmen who, according to the same informant, could sell real estate to the judge during a criminal trial—the tempo of the oft mentioned "surging Broadway"—of Harlem—of Coney Island—of screaming sirens—"wise-cracking" police—of rackets—of floods, fire, riots, lynchings, famine, drought—of mass deaths—in fact, the tempo of the "movie" America

"Small groups meet for Mensendieck "

"For—I'm sorry, would you say it again—?"

"Mensendieck work invaluable for absorbing the first principles of posture . . . "

I was being told about the Gloucester School of the Theatre—Gloucester, Massachusetts, apparently an hour or so from Boston

". . . has as its purpose the accurate training of the individual in self-directed body mechanics The attainment of this technique results in functional beauty the correct use of the muscles in standing, walking, sitting A conscious control of the whole body is established which is finally assimilated and becomes automatic instead of being forgotten and disused "

Quite a long and sober discourse for such a young woman

"But if the course is concentrated into eight weeks and concludes at the end of this month, you won't catch much of it?" I queried

"No—for me that's over—completed my time there—a play

a week for those high-powered eight—and the school put me on Broadway——”

The flying start which the Gloucester Little Theatre School had given this amazingly vital young woman in two “high-powered” months had subsequently led her beyond Broadway to a London season from which she was now returning.

Fanatics invariably irritate rather than recruit me but for years I have been a pawn to any fanaticism of the theatre——

So that during this trip over I absorbed many facts about this dynamic Gloucester Little Theatre course, and I pass a few of them on for those whom it may interest.

Novelist-playwright May Sarton had once passed through this dramatic mill. Gradoates have acted with Ethel Barrymore, Ina Claire, Katherine Cornell, and a host of other famous names——

Controlling the carefully-picked staff of twelve was Mrs. Florence Evans—the Mrs. Evans according to her ex-pupil—a very vital lady who also found time to run the Boston School of Public Speaking when not preparing new stars for Broadway’s constellation——

The Little Theatre was apparently built on the water’s edge of a very beautiful Massachusetts’ bay.

“Cut your expedition and rise to heights via Mrs. Evans’ Theatre——”

I laughed at the idea of relinquishing a real wild Indian-cum-Treasure hunt, but my laugh was superfluous for I subsequently learnt that the Gloucester School is famous in the world of the American Theatre.

Sometime before we slipped into New York harbour “quarantine”, the Dutch-American doctor of my table joined me to watch car headlights from a starboard deck.

As we drew oo American weed and my friod pointed out an illuminated tower, deck chairs were dragged up behind us.

“Of course, I’ll be frightfully keen for you to call on me in Hollywood—just ring the studio and I’ll have them send a car . . .”

. It seemed to be the treble voice of some very excited English female.

"Y'know I'm not sure actually where I shall stay—suite at the 'Bev—Wilshire' I suppose—then perhaps a house in the 'Hills'—"

The voice momentarily took on a deeper note—one of reflective, contemplative meditation—yet, as I thought then, rather unbecoming for any girl in films

"Of course there's the Ambassador's"—languidly

The original shrill note returned

"Y'know we of the film world are so tushed—our souls don't really belong to us—make-up—photographers—fittings—and our post—"

"Post?" came a young man's voice

"Fan mail," the other explained "Of course I shall probably engage a secretary to attend to it—no, I must have a secretary, it's so devastating having to reply to people whom you haven't even met—"

"Y'know Aunt says that I must be careful what I spend," the voice went on "It's so terribly foolish to economise in Hollywood—so John says—must have a car—be seen everywhere—"

The intended audience came to life again

"But the expenses provided by your contract . . ."

"Yes, my contract may be arranged to cover everything, but . . ."

"May be?"

"Well, it's all not quite settled Y'see when Aunt and I met John—"

"John—"

"Oh"

"He has an uncle . . ."

Here a name was mentioned which is occasionally listed with the supporting casts of American films Recently it had been coupled with the 'lion's part' in a secondary English film.

"When he heard how I was struggling for recognition amongst the 'extras'—he was most unhappy—said, if I went to Hollywood, he'd . . ."

There appeared to be no limit to the fame which this high-pitched voice would reach

Curious to set eyes on this "star of the morrow", the doctor and I glanced behind us—then looked at one another.

Here was no ravishing beauty, shimmering in an expensive evening cloak—no simple little English girl whose pleasantly determined face expressed desire to "make good in films".

Merely two youths *lolling in canvas*—one pimply—the other not.

The latter rose and stretched—

"I'd better pack, it's getting late—decent of you to tell me about yourself—"

"Well, old thing, I hope if you are out that way—just ring the studio."

I looked again at the spotted youth—perhaps his boy friend *did* meet him in Hollywood—perhaps he didn't.

But eight months later I saw that same pimply face or its double—heard the same voice or its double—taking soda fountain orders in a "downtown" Los Angeles café.

CHAPTER III

FOR the third time from that uncanny, heated atmosphere
I hear that voice again

"Tea, sir," it is rasping Then again "Tea, sir" "The repeated words seem to be hammering at my brain
"Tea, sir Tea sir TEA, sir" "SIX O'CLOCK AND TEA, SIR."

I don't bother to subject my optics to the violence of an early opening I know that I have been wrapt in slumberous reverie, whisked through a world of peculiar fancy

It has been an uncomfortable sort of dream, an infusion of mountain crags—of gipsy dancing—of a little chapel above pine-wood forests—of Serbian soldiers idling at a nearby hill-side inn—of a precipice fall and a pine tree bounding towards me

An infusion, in fact, of things pleasant and unpleasant In this dream I have suffered an oddly comfortable black-out, for a time actually toying with the idea that I was dead—that I had fallen—been impaled, at the bottom of a valley

But no I realize now that it's just my uncontrolled mind again With my eyes still closed, I appreciate that "early to bed" is the thing, and less of this mountain climbing

"SIX O'CLOCK, SIR SIX O'CLOCK."

"*Dobra Utro*," I breathe as I wait to hear the shutters and curtains drawn

But I don't hear them Instead my shoulder is shaken, shaken hard

"For a guy landing first time in New York . . . you're certainly sleeping"

No shutter divided sunbeams, just electric light No Jugoslavian bedroom, just a ship's cabin No plump little Slovene maid, just a brisk white-coated steward

"Called you a dozen times"

He sets down an orange on a plate beside my teacup

No, I haven't packed my cut-throat . . .

It is marking time by my berth when the steward drags me from my nocturnal fantasy to a discussion concerning early luggage on deck

Six a.m. and barely half light

The steward though hasty and practical has something of the artist in him. New York is his city. Throughout the voyage he has spoken of it . . . conversationally dissected for me the various New Yorks in one

He has arranged this hour for my first and "best impression of the Town". He wants me to see Manhattan lighted . . . the "Towers" by night

From his description it is a scene which tattoos a lasting impression. I have told him that it is a sight to which I have looked forward. And so he has called me at six . . . six o'clock, when it is day—and yet night

Yes, it is *still* "night"—the illuminations of which he has spoken so much, which make such spectacular photographs, should be there

Then if I am to be a "sponge" to the steward's sense of showmanship, why am I in bed? I have only to ask myself before I am out

And now that my liver has withstood this shock, I find enthusiasm subjecting me to everything it's got. It is quite difficult to repress the inclination to catapult to the porthole and to ward it off, I continue a momentary discussion on luggage. I feel like an infant about to be shown an ostrich. With the slightest encouragement I could do Mickey Mouse capers and clap "Goody goody". The steward has certainly sold me on whatever it is that I am to see and every minute it is growing lighter. I find that I cannot concentrate—that I must, even with summoned "dignity", push my head through the porthole. So I give up the struggle

Not as dark as I had thought. Yet lights are still about—a harbour beacon—in the distance bluish lights

But what lights? I peer again. Strange ghostly glimmers suspended in the morning mist

As my eyes wean themselves from the brilliant glare of the

cabin, slender, barely discernible shapes frame these distant lights. A strange gripping feeling commandeers my arteries, yet what I have seen does not quite scale my ladder of expectation. These are certainly *they!* Lights that we have heard about—New York lights—a constellation that is the “Manhattan Towers”—in this case, partly fogbound—

But their “splendour”, of which we read and hear so much, where is it? Where is the brilliance, the magnificence, that is said to mark the New York all night scene?

The melody “Lullaby of Broadway”, permanently grafted in my brain by a “radio-gram armed” brother, sees its chance and parades its lyrics across my mind

“ . . . Manhattan ‘Babies’ don’t sleep tight until the dawn . . .” They run on “Sleep tight, Ba by sleep tight the milkman’s on his way ”

Who else but the milkman could be abroad, at this zero hour, *among those cold cañons of steel and mortar ahead?* Obviously it is too much to expect the 350,000 lights of the “Empire State Building”, for instance, to be kept burning for eccentrics arriving in New York. Unknown to my slightly disillusioned spirits, I am not to see the spectacle which means so much to the steward—a dazzling, fully lighted New York from the waters of the harbour—until the eve of my return to Europe, nearly nine months from now. But not knowing this, my eyes gorge everything that the porthole will allow. It seems to become perceptibly lighter in the five minutes that I am there. As the silhouettes that are skyscrapers take definite form, I become as enthusiastic as any “arty” steward . . . as any schoolboy

After all, I muse, I have good reason to be. This is my first visit to America

But the hovering steward (now in one of his practical moments) interrupts my train of thought. He speaks of quarantine, of baggage to be taken on deck

He is impatient but masks it with over-attention—for this to him is the most important day of the voyage—the day that I shall show appreciation . . .

Everything is packed but my razor and pyjamas. I tell him that if he returns in fifteen minutes . . .

He leaves and I pick up my razor. It is a new one and was bought for the voyage.

I put it down and commence to slide and dab my brush over the surface of the shaving "cream". Its slap-slap squelching sound in the small wooden bowl is very satisfying. It seems to be saying: "I am marking the beginning of a new and very big day. . . ."

The bowl of "cream" is Continental and for ten days it has helped my razor with that little extra something.

But I am not conscious of what I am doing. My mind is journeying ahead.

Who are these people whom I am to accompany to South America? What are their individual aims? For what reasons have they attached themselves to the Expedition? What does each man hope to gain? Are they all scientists?

I have not met any one of them, but the leader is related to me—

As a British officer he should feel pleased with his record. He has a number of expeditions to his credit . . . as well as trekking experiences all over the world.

I reflect . . . any trip with him should be worth while. An important American museum is sponsoring the enterprise. The itinerary that I have read and re-read on the way over intimates that dull moments will be few. It even suggests that at times the trip will be hazardous—

I smile as I think of this . . . good window dressing . . . Yet, is it?

I mentally review the "programme", as I slide the cut-throat across one cheek. I ask myself: "Why shouldn't there be a 'tribe of hostile Indians of whom little is known massacring peaceful natives' on the Amazon tributaries in Ecuador?"

Why shouldn't there be a "golden hoard worth millions", hidden beside old Inca trails, in that country?

It is history and a proved fact that the Incas hid considerable quantities of their accumulation of gold from the conquering Spaniards . . . somewhere . . .

Where then is there any cause or reason to ridicule a quest for the recovery of part of it?

I recollect my Aunt's words as I dined with her before leav-

ing London "People have been searching for centuries for the Incas treasure Why should you "

To these sage words I might have replied "But not, dear Aunt, with the equipment that we shall take with us strong reinforced equipment the very best "

Since then I have remembered that it has taken eight months to organize this expedition Most of these have been taken up in research and the study of old Spanish documents relating to the Conquest and the Kingdom of the Incas

A good man is to lead the party—a responsible New York "Foundation" is behind it—

My mind wanders again to the main object of the expedition It is hard to believe that "wild Indians" still exist

Yet once again, what do I really know of South America?

I have met the man who led the first party to find Fawcett—there were times when he expected a similar fate—

Then if there are "wild men" in Brazil why not in this country called Ecuador?

Their alleged mode of massacre conjures a very bloody vision Bodies of peaceful Indians, says the lunatic, have been found stuck with fifty or sixty war spears

This seems a little doubtful ten spears perhaps

Arms and legs, it says also, have been found 'lopped from victims'

God! What a mess, I reflect, as for want of a better subject my mind dwells on the idea of gore pouring from a carcass

The glaze covering my eyes (for in my mental rampancies I have been seeing nothing) dissolves away, and I find myself staring at one of my "visions" in material form

My neck has been slathered in rich splashes of red After all it is a "cut throat" every morning I forget that mole

We are moving up the unwarmed harbour of New York—creeping slowly towards Manhattan Island as a biting wind crosses the decks

I have a telegram from Eric in my pocket which was delivered to me soon after we left "quarantine" It says

"Regret cannot meet you, 'phone me Barclay Hotel"

I climb to "A" deck, with my table friend the doctor, to be shown the New York he knows. More disappointment

The harbour shores have not the beauty of those that I have seen at, for instance, Sydney, Australia—

At the moment my impressions are of open country and of bungalows—the type found on any holiday "lakeside" in any part of the world

Eventually as we proceed nearer to the Statue of Liberty—the scenes change

Yet the side which I am told is "New Jersey" looks unexciting from the middle of the harbour—like uninteresting parts of Glasgow or the Tyneside—

"Brooklyn" seems slightly better—yet still I am unimpressed. I am afraid that I expected more than I have found, after all that I had heard of New York Harbour

But ahead stand those skyscrapers—as we have seen them on the movies. Yet in a way different, for here they have depth

A hum of industry appears to engulf these slender giants—big intangible things seem to be happening out of sight amid their chasms

I am surprised that there are so few skyscrapers—Yes, so few, for there appears to be only a small cluster of them

Is it correct then, that the average height of Paris is greater than New York City?

We are abreast of the Statue of Liberty now. I feel appropriately impressed. The doctor buoys my awe with facts and figures

He tells me that the torch of this colossal female figure towers three hundred feet into the air—that the statue itself weighs one hundred tons—that the cost was one hundred and twenty thousand pounds. I learn that it is the work of a French sculptor, Frederic Bartholdi, and that it was completed in 1883 as a suitable gift to commemorate the 'long-established good will' between France and America

He says "Bedloes" when I ask him the name of the island on which it stands, and adds that the statue is even much higher than was the Colossus of "Rhodes"

A staircase in the monument makes it possible to reach the torch at the extreme height of the extended arm. The torch

balcony can accommodate fifteen people. Above this balcony is an electric light which illuminates the torch at night.

But by now we have passed it—we are so much closer to these man made castles that form Lower Manhattan that the mind is bewildered by any attempt to grasp the real size of those gigantic towers—the smallest of them housing a population of a reasonably sized town—

As we make our way to the top deck I am told that apart from the Eiffel Tower there is nothing in the old world to compare with them.

I mentally contradict my informant, thinking of the pride of Ljubljana, Jugoslavia.

However, I gather that forty of these "skyscrapers" are higher than the Great Pyramid and that two of them rise over one thousand feet.

The "more recent" towers pointed out to me are graceful in outline, but it is their height that stuns the imagination. And they look so firm that they seem to have been constructed to Ruskin's

"Let us think that we build for ever."

I am to learn in time that the skyscraper is not an American eccentricity or the result of a desire to go one better.

It is a logical solution to the question of economizing on space in a commercial city with a huge daytime population. New York is incapable of lateral expansion.

These buildings are the intelligent result. They tower aggressively above us as we move up the western side of Manhattan Island.

"Is that the 'Empire State'?" I ask, pointing to one that seems to rise above the others.

I am told that it's the "Cities Service Building" and that the other ominous tower beside it is "International Telephones."

In turn the more important ones are pointed out to me—I am told that a little green strip at the foot of them all is Battery Park. That the little island away to their right is Governor's Island—seat of the British Admiralty when New York was

under our flag. But I still haven't seen the much advertised 'Empire State Building'.

"You'll have to wait until we get further up-river."

And we creep up the Hudson, leaving the famous (and—to some—"infamous") cluster to recede on our starboard side.

The forward lounge appears to have become a circus.

Chairs have been placed in lines so as to form not one aisle but several, alphabetically segregated.

Seated at tables facing these aisles are hard-boiled immigration officials.

It is like a game.

Armed with your visaed passport, you sit as near as possible to the scaffold in the line which represents your section of the alphabet.

Then, as each victim vacates his or her chair and moves grimly forward on that lone journey to face the fire of American officialdom, the line resembles an incoming wave, as each sitter realizes individually that he or she must "move up one".

Finally it is my turn to leave the line, and I walk forward to be cross-questioned.

Although I expect to stay only two days before again sailing, I have taken special care to provide myself with a visitor's visa (valid for twelve months' stay).

But the immigration official takes even greater care to mark me as a "Transit" case.

"So you're going South—okay, we'll give you fifteen days in America."

When "all the smoke has cleared away" I wander out on to the deck and look down at the "dock" into which we are edging broadside.

The sun is now concentrating its ten o'clock intensity—the water looks green, the metal dome at the top of the towering "Empire State" is a ball of fire.

Yes, it is going to be a good day.

All sorts of faces—mostly "Panama-hatted"—stare and shout to us from the wharf.

"Hey, you old 'so-and-so', come down from there—"

"Welcome to America!"

Whole family intimacies fit from ship to shore

"I said Vergie and Elmer—it's canned—finished—done—"

"The *second* in nineteen months "

"Poisonal appearances from here to the coast—Johnnie says it's in the bag—but Herman wants it signed—"

In the warmth of the New York day I stay idly pondering over the animations of these people fifty feet below us

This is the American scene I tell myself—it must be—it couldn't be England

I wonder ungallantly how many English girls I have seen with the careless sparkle of little Miss White Shoes, who is bantering with a companion as they wait, on the wharf, for the gangway to be lowered

How many Englishmen have I seen with that "Let me give you a really big hand" demeanour Or that hearty "Wall Street and three million square miles behind me" largeness which seems to direct the manner of these people on the wharf

It is not difficult to sense the "God spare-me-from-that" thoughts of some sons of England kind enough to concentrate on this narrative But, as far as I am concerned, from the little experience I have had of them, Americans are—to use their own vocabulary—"grand" Yes, "grand", meaning big—fine—immense—immense in their gestures—immense with their gratitude—immense in all matters pertaining to hospitality, courtesy, and their own projects

And, leaning over the promenade "rail", I wonder now whether I shall encounter many exceptions to these preliminary conceptions I consider that I am going to like this great English-speaking nation on which I am gazing for the first time Already, as the result of conversations with the few people whom I have met "on board", the need for a much better understanding of the United States by England strikes me forcibly

I like this lack-of-repression or freedom-of-expression—untempered by restraint which appears to emanate from Americans Just listen to one of them in the process of thanking somebody for something In the majority of cases there is

a sincerity behind the way in which he or she does it, which is refreshing in its genuineness. I have learnt their word for this verbal tincture. They call it "mmpb"!

The first part of my journey is over and I am soon to meet the "Expedition". The *Manhattan* has come to rest with her stern towards New Jersey.

Her bows are pointing in towards "the Island".

"When your dinner-shirts have been heaved into the mud—when every decent suit you possess and most of your luggage has been dog-eared and crumpled—at least then you'll have a prejudice or two—"

In this way my dealings with the New York Customs have been forecast by one of those nothing-outside-England specimens, who unfortunately abound in our little corner of the world.

"I know," he has assured me, "Albert went across once—"

So that as I hunt for the correct alphabetical section which will mark the whereabouts of my luggage, I mentally prepare myself to meet such a situation.

A printed form—presented to all passengers, whilst at sea—has made it clear that before the New York Customs examination can take place, each passenger should locate his luggage in the "shed" and segregate it from that of other passengers. He or she is then to call the attention of one of the many inspectors at the bureau and "normal customs examination will follow".

I am surprised to find that *normal* customs examination does follow—that instead of my starched shirts taking a short and snappy journey from the comfortable interior of my cabin trunk to an undignified sprawl in the dust of the wharf, they are carefully lifted and replaced. In any case the official prefers me to do the lifting.

I find myself thinking that possibly hand in glove with the American conception of "freedom", a "tooth-for-a-tooth" is, perhaps, not a totally ignored adage, especially when the "I-say-my-man—" specimens refuse to consider seriously any other officialdom than that of their own country. I note in one case

that too much of what I call "Englishness" has brought one Customs hawk down heavily on a victim

But, as far as my own "examination" is concerned, things run smoothly. My luggage is put through quickly and with no waiting.

A be-whiskered "Old Bill" shirt sleeved, slouch-capped, porter soon has my trunk on a trolley and I dog his footsteps until we have reached a descending escalator.

"This," he tells me, wiping his stained fungus with a leg-of-mutton palm, "is as far as I go——"

CHAPTER IV

"PHONE? In the bookstall kiosk," grunted the hirsute custodian of my luggage, with another push at his tobacco-juiced luxuriance.

"No," he added, "I can't wait by your trunk. . . ."

But for a little extra he did, and I tracked down the 'phone.

The telephone systems of the world don't differ very much in principle, but those in New York exercised my brain. There was no button "A" or button "B". The dial-numbers were in the order of two letters and five figures, instead of our own of three letters and four figures. This was straightforward, but after a series of experiments in which I fed an instrument with a glut of loose change, I discovered that following "failure to connect", it was necessary to hang up the receiver and wait for the coin to automatically clink back into the recovery scoop. A nickel was the charge for a local call and eventually I was through to the Barclay Hotel—

"Right—come along," Eric concluded, "we're at forty-ninth and Lexington—very husy—we've very little time—"

So I rejoined my walrus friend and when he had slung my trunk on to the descending escalator and I had tipped him, we parted, and I followed my possessions to a lower level.

Although "luxury cabs" haunt New York, there was a very poor display of wheeled scrap-metal at the bottom of the escalator. Some of it, which in England would have barely fetched five pounds per car, was taking on passengers and luggage and snorting up ramps. These ramps were so steep and each cab was so dependent on the next one moving forward that I thought at once about loose distributor leads and weak axles. But this morbid meditation was dispersed by a husky-looking docker balancing my trunk on his shoulder in a

manner suggesting that the heavy contents had been left elsewhere

"Hallo, Mr. Loch, what weather in the Old Country?"

Already a friend. He listened with apparent interest as I skimmed around the recent English temperatures and periods of sunshine.

"Boy, have ~~we~~ had hot nights," he exchanged, "N'York's bin sleepin' on the roof—this cab will take you——"

I climbed into the quivering "ex yellow" monster and a couple of bullock teams under the bonnet heaved the contraption up the ramp.

Or perhaps they were greyhounds. I sat in the middle of that dusty upholstered "cage" wondering if worse things really did happen at sea or on the streets of Paris. Once in an English fog, a couple of thousand feet above the ground, a sizeable shadow had flashed under my nose. I had only just learnt to tinker effectively with the controls of the snorting thing in which I sat, and that shadow had produced a similar sensation in my stomach to the one which I now experienced.

This New York shirt sleeved driver meant business and appeared to be unconcerned with the question of wear and tear. However, as I attempted to philosophically reflect, this was America. And according to the Old World that word was synonymous with "hustle".

There came a time when buildings ceased to bend at angles and eventually someone opened a door allowing me to plump to the pavement of the Barclay Hotel. In future, I decided, I should stick to roundabouts or quiet little aeroplanes. It hurt me to actually pay money for this distress but, as I handed a 'greenback' to the driver, such barely relevant thinking was banished by a black "Ford" rushing at the hotel with a brake-lining squeal. Four young men pouted from the front seat, disclosing a rear compartment piled high with boxes.

They lost no time in fishing these out, whilst one of them looked up and down the street and then rushed into the Barclay.

"Hold it—we don't want a hole blown in the side walk——"

"I said, WE NEED AT LEAST ONE THOUSAND OF FORTY FIVE AND A HEAP OF THIRTY THREE SPECIAL, AND WE NEED IT NOW——"

"And how did he take it?"

"He slid me five thousand of each."

Car-occupant number four burst out through the door-way with a set expression—

"Fellers we've got to work fast . . ."

I flung my powers of recollection after the names of American public enemies in whom Fleet Street had shown an interest over the past few years. But the hospitality of my receptive imagination was checked as three uniformed hotel porters bounded out. "The bell hops will fix 'em—now fellers be careful—those go straight up to the Expedition—"

Eric was chatting in a foyer lounge chair. I recognized him at once although we had never met previously. From intermittent correspondence extending over a period of years I had a fair idea of the fellow I was to see.

He also showed immediate recognition—

"Alasdair? By God!" was his greeting.

Then in practically the same breath he rattled off facts and figures, outlining the part I should play in the expedition and the extra equipment which I should acquire at once.

"So much to do . . ." he murmured, unconsciously quoting Rhodes' alleged last words—

In a suite upstairs, it appeared, where things seemed craziest, I should meet the other members of the expedition. So I left Eric to his interview and sought this "Marx Brother" section of the hotel.

But what I actually found was a well-organized example of how to do something in a hurry. There were "members" painting, there were friends hammering lids, reporters were clinking ice in glasses, a 'phone rang twice as I stood in the doorway watching. In the room beyond there were more voices and another 'phone rang. It suggested a carpentry lesson at a cocktail party.

"Mark that one, too."

"Yes, two thousand with twenty four inch blades . . ."

"Sure—the concentrated vegetable is numbered and ready—"

"No, the expedition does not expect to find Fawcett—

they will not be looking for Colonel Fawcett—their activities will be centred on the other side of South America ”

“Are the camp beds here? Then why not? I told that—”

“Machine guns? No, I’m afraid not—hope it won’t be that kind of an expedition. The collapsible boat is already at the docks, along with the out board engines ”

Perhaps Eric was right when he spoke of a Marx Brother atmosphere. The only place where I have seen anything to parallel the disturbed interior of that suite, was in a film studio. Over a hundred cases stretched around the walls, one upon the other. Saws, nails and pieces of rope lay about on the floor as if to trap the restless community who wended their intricate way among people wielding hammers and paint.

And all this was taking place in what the press would call a “luxury hotel”

Soon after I had introduced myself to the circus upstairs Eric appeared again. He had barely time to fling a ‘Good—so you’ve met them all,’ at me, before passing into the next room to an alarmist telephone. It was another eight hours before I had a chat with him.

The Special Correspondent for the London *Sunday Express* observed of Eric that he was “packing in an hotel room, collecting scores of tubes of tooth paste, packages of cereals, razor blades, and a ‘multitude’ of other things they will be unable to obtain in the wild land of the lost Incas ”

The Correspondent added that Eric ‘grabbed a parcel containing scores of long thin knives, and put them in a packing case’

“These are machetes,” Eric was quoted as having said, “they use them in South America for everything from cutting bananas to killing. I’m taking them as gifts for the natives ”

His alleged comments on the treasure interests of the expedition were published as follows

“The rise and fall of the Incan civilization is one of the greatest dramas of the world. If we could shed more light on it, we could show the world a new page in its history ”

“High in the mountains above the wild parts of Ecuador

there lies a lake that only two white men have seen. That is our main quarry.

"Beneath the waters of that lake one of the world's greatest secrets, the lost treasure of the Incas, has remained hidden for more than four hundred years.

"If legends are right, that lake is littered with enough gold to alter the entire financial system of the present day world.

"Incas brought the gold there and sank it to keep it from the grasp of the Spanish conquistador Pizarro, who, with one hundred and eighty nine soldiers, destroyed the empire of twelve million people, in his greed for gold to replenish the emptied coffers of Spain.

"One of the two white men who saw the lake was a Spaniard named Valverde, who died at Seville at the end of the sixteenth century and left a secret document describing the route.

"In 1912 Captain C. E. Brooks, an American, managed to reach the lake through the help of three Indian guides.

"He saw on the opposite side of the lake a vague-looking structure, which seemed to be like the porch of a church.

"He hastened to cross the lake to reach this but a cloud-burst held him back.

"His Indians fled, and Brooks had a hard fight to return to civilization alive.

"Brooks died in New York several years later, but he told a friend about the lake.

"That friend told me . . .

"We shall take the same path trodden by Valverde more than three hundred years ago. It is a dangerous journey round the side of a precipitous mountain, but it is the easiest way to get there."

My forty-eight hours in Manhattan slipped quickly by.

Apart from the little matters of equipment, of instruments, of visas, of the bank, and many (unnecessary) etceteras at the advice of the very well meaning, there was the business of seeing New York.

After a great deal of "Ford V-Eighting" about a very hot, and (at the time) dirty, yet amazing Manhattan, I found myself

squatting on my heels in the Barclay Hotel, armed with a brush dripping selignum

Spectators and well wishers seemed to have thinned out fairly well—there were perhaps five or six people wandering in and out of the doorway—and a certain amount of conversation taking place in a room beyond

Then suddenly at my ear

"Why spend your first evening in New York like this?"

"Any suggestions?" I asked this very attractive part of the organization

"Plenty. Let's start with the Empire State—we can walk it."

"Not a restaurant?" I queried, my mind on all that I had heard of Broadway "Diggers"

"Why—no restaurants in Europe?" was the retort

"Come along, little boy—you're going to see New York—"

Fifth Avenue, bordered by its mighty buildings is so dwarfed that it is almost a trench. And the "Empire State" rises above it all to a height of one thousand two hundred and fifty feet and occupies the site of the old Waldorf Astoria Hotel at the corner of 34th Street. Incidentally the now giant Waldorf Astoria is just around the corner from the Barclay Hotel.

We walked through the numerous ground floor halls of the "Empire State"—each one seemingly being bounded by rows of "elevators"—express lifts—to carry passengers non stop to different floors of the building.

At a counter, heaped with souvenirs and post cards of the building, we bought tickets for the journey to the top at six shillings apiece.

A young military academy student in uniform had led his parents to the counter before we reached it.

"We're from Montana," he offered to the girl selling the tickets, "how many floors do we shoot for the top?"

"The-Empire State-Building is-one-hundred-and-two-floors high," the girl quoted mechanically. "Above-the-observation tower they are experimenting with-television."

"Ge-e-ee," the youth replied, goggle-eyed, "ya hear that Maw—?"

There are sixty one passenger lifts in the "Empire State" and six for baggage

As far as I can remember the first one took us up about sixty-eight stories non stop

Then disembarking we caught another to the "eighty sixth floor". Here we found a *café*, another souvenir counter and guides to show us round the rectangular parapet. This was one thousand and forty five feet high—just one foot less in height than the "Chrysler" building

Knowing that we could go higher we didn't stay, but caught another lift to the "hundred and second floor" and stepped into the circular glassed observation room

New York from this vantage point at any time of the year—day or night—is impressive

Unless there is cloud or fog about, the whole of the island is visible

To see Times Square—New York's "Piccadilly Circus"—flashing its coloured signs so far away—so very far below, immediately reminds you of a nocturnal air trip. But that this point in the sky, from which you are gazing down upon New York City, is actually connected with it all, is a fact that you can only resignedly accept as being so, though the mind finds it almost impossible to grasp

Manhattan—with the exception of snake-like Broadway, the Bowery and other curvatures, has most of its avenues running north and south, and its streets directed east and west. These avenues and streets are numbered so that any newcomer realizing the numerical order has little chance of losing his way

Although Broadway curves a great deal, it runs the whole length of the island, more-or less north and south—the low numbered streets commence at the most southerly part of the island so that a theatre advertised as being "at Broadway and 42nd Street" or the number of a building, at for instance, W 36th Street, is easily found

From the observation tower New York City was outlined in lights as an illuminated map

As we looked northwards towards a large, comparatively unlighted rectangular strip, two-thirds of the way up the island, I was told that it was Central Park

"And that will be Park Avenue bordering it on the right," I suggested

"No, Fifth Avenue, and on Fifth Avenue's right Madison—then Park."

"Those are New York's three main avenues," I was informed

Then again whilst still looking northwards "That's 'darkie' Harlem—White Plains to the left"

Walking to the other side of the Observation Room the maze of illuminated towers pleased us, it was like the glow of some stilled gigantic fairground "Stilled" for at this height above the city we could hear nothing, not even Fifth Avenue traffic

Down harbour we could see the light of the Statue of Liberty

Then moving around the circular room—"There's Greenwich Village, our artists congregate there"

"Ob, like London's Chelsea"

"Yes, I've heard so, but we have our Chelsea also Look! it's that section down by Greenwich, to the left"

"This building (it was fourteen streets away, yet at this height we seemed to overhang it) is the 'R.C.A.'—main tower of the Rockefeller Centre

"Those illuminated roof gardens are seventy floors high, and they take ninety six thousand gallons of water every day"

"Ninety-six thousand? How could they use that amount?"

"Waterfalls, streams, fountains and the watering system They call it all the 'Gardens of Nations' and the blooms come from European countries and even Japan"

"What is 'R.C.A.'? What do the letters represent?"

"Radio Corporation of America—headquarters of the 'N.B.C.'—"

And then I remembered my short wave radio reception of America, over in England, and the familiar words of the announcer "This is the Red Network of the National Broadcasting Company, R.C.A. Building, Radio City, New York..."

"What else is there in the Rockefeller Centre that I might see sometime?"

"Center Theatre . . . biggest in the world—oh, and the Rainbow Room on the sixty-fifth . . ."

It appeared that the Rainbow Room was a two-story high dining and dancing establishment with a revolving dance-floor, twenty-seven feet in diameter, and a "colour organ".

"A what?"

"A colour organ—automatically converts vocal, instrumental, or organ music into appropriate colour harmonies."

"How do you know all these things?"

"My city—and I'm a journalist. We have to know—"

We must have stayed an hour just looking down at New York.

My friend claimed that we had "only just begun", but my time was limited. There was still work to be done at the hotel.

She had been right. I appreciated New York more fully from the top of the "Empire State" than I might have from the interior of a gilded "speak". Yes, I heard one of the night-clubs still referred to in this way, even though prohibition has been abolished several years.

As we walked back through the warm streets, to the Barclay Hotel, I was surprised to notice that apart from such things as the higher buildings of this metropolis, there was a great deal of similarity between London and New York. And despite the insinuations of the English 'critics', Americans seemed just as ordinary and as orderly as we like to consider ourselves.

In the middle of the caffions of the city, we passed a small 'colonial' weatherboard cottage, completely painted in white. It seemed strange to see it sitting at the foot of this towering masonry. Obviously it had never been occupied.

I was told that it was a "sample". This, to me, was salesmanship.

Street hawkers 'displayed' in much the same way as our own. But it interested me to frequently pass tripod-mounted telescopes on the pavement. Stellar observations at a nickel a time. Or you could "watch Senator So-and-so on the thirty-seventh floor . . ."

A newspaper-seller at my elbow addressed nobody in particular.

"I can give you a lovely suicide," he hollered, against a cupped palm. "Happened right in the heart of the city . . . can't miss . . ."

CHAPTER V

ON the following morning I was walking with one of the expedition across Battery Park at the "foot" of Manhattan Island

One of the men lying on his back in the grass got up and asked me for a cigarette. I gave him four or five

"Say—thanks"

He asked for nothing more. A bloodstained rag decorated his head. One arm was in a dirty sling and one side of his face had taken a fair amount of punishment

"A beat up," commented Moot, who was to be a doctor as well as geologist to the expedition

After an hour or two back at "headquarters" I left the others, still juggling with paint and cases, to explore a little of New York on my own.

The City's underground tube railway was not impressive. For one reason or another I had expected better of New York. For cleanliness the system was not comparable to that of London, Sydney or even Paris. The "Overhead" trains were an eye-sore, although I believe that Sixth Avenue has just done something about this. They clattered and rattled but did not seem to attain very high speeds.

For a long time I had wanted to see Floyd Bennett Airfield. The hotel barber had advised catching the subway "to Flatbush, Brooklyn and ask again."

So at the 42nd Street terminal, above which towers the building of Grand Central, allegedly the "finest station in the world", I dropped a nickel (twopence ha'penny) into a turnstile slot and shot away towards Flatbush.

Yet I ended up at Coney Island

There on the railway plan, branching away from Flatbush, had been a line leading to Coney Island, all that I had ever

heard of this extraordinary Margate cum Blackpool suddenly flooded my capricious mind to temporarily eclipse any thought of "Floyd Bennett" and I just sat tight to see what exactly lay ahead

And bere it was

A wide board walk stretched along the Coney Island beaches which were mysteriously divided off into sections of probably a hundred yards per strip. For extremist students of anatomy this watering place should be a Mecca. A great percentage of the bathers were Jewish and negro. The glare was terrific, the sand dirty, and the converging mass of human meat offered newcomers little encouragement. Not even a small cat could have been swung amongst that aquatic congregation.

I bought some coloured glasses, but they were so bad that the eye strain lessened when I discarded them. I tried other pairs. But they were all cheap and hard on the eyes.

It has never been easy for me to outgrow my sneaking weakness for mermaid sideshows, tents with two-headed hippos or kiosks with snake-girls. And now as I stood, victim to a pine-apple juice stall beneath one of the many towering monsters of twisted iron, my eye caught a roller coaster in action. I learnt that the precipitous railway, on which the lightning streak had flashed itself for an instant was

THE CYCLONE.

"Be scared to death we kill you for a dime 2
ninety feet vertical drop "

The patter at least was frank about it.

A "joy car" waited by the low wooden platform with already one or two apprehensive passengers biting their nails in the front seats.

The hand on that wooden lever began it all. With nothing less than a rush we swooped amidst the steel maze and very slowly climbed the metal "ladder" to—well, I was not very certain what the immediate future had to offer. This form of recreation had never previously ventured my way but I expected it would be all right.

It was pleasant moving so high above Coney Island and to be able to enjoy it all from the comfort of this open "car". I sat back, spread my legs and stretched in the sunshine that seemed to concentrate on the peak of this steel hill.

Well, we had reached the top. What exactly was to happen now? Could this doubtful sort of amusement offer anything unobtainable on a subway ride?

There was that restful moment when we were practically at a standstill high up on the pinnacle of this over-and-down bend in the rails. In the soothing sun I yawned sleepily. I realized now that a good sunbake on the beach would have represented a more reasonable way of spending the morning. Well, anyhow, this nonsense was soon to be over.

But, as I sat basking in those warm rays and looking out to sea, I wondered whether that iced fruit drink should have been swallowed so quickly.

Have you ever been thrown over a cliff in a barrel? I have heard of such a thing happening at Niagara Falls. But have you experienced it, or the same effect?

If that "car" had solely relied upon gravity to hurl itself down that "ninety feet" mass, perhaps—

But, this being the age of high powered electric machinery, anything was liable to happen. And of course it did. With complete unanalytical disregard that barrel bumped its way down the never-ending cliff, over and over, bouncing suddenly at right angles from rocks, or so it seemed. Splendid reasons for me to kick myself tumbled over and over beside post mortems on that late cray fish supper.

Then after an eternity of hour upon hour unreality I came out from behind the spotted darkness of my eyelids and found that the barrel had come to rest. And that it was not a barrel but a switchback car.

A notice hanging above the termination of this nightmare invited a repetition of it all. I gazed blearily at it, and flopped hurtled from the "car".

Half an hour later above Floyd Bennett Airfield I took over the controls of a 'dualled' Sunson cabin monoplane. As well as the regular pilot beside me, there were two "first fighters" in the back.

The wings and nose of the machine were swaying very unsoberly in response to my manipulation of the controls. It was like riding on a camel.

"First time I've flown a machine with wheel-controlled ailerons," I protested half-heartedly.

"Seems like we was riding a roller-coaster," returned the dubious fellow beside me.

"Well, how does she handle?" asked a mechanic cheerfully, as I sheepishly left the plane. Meanwhile two very pallid passengers crawled out behind me and walked away wordless.

There was some satisfaction in knowing that other stomachs had curdled that morning.

On the Fifth Avenue bus, which was a double-decker with an open roof, the fares were collected by a conductor who came around with a small hand instrument, the size of an average camera, into which you fed a dime. On the Sixth Avenue buses your fare is a nickel.

For a quick meal the drug stores were always handy with their "sure-fire service counter" as I heard one of the white-capped and aproned attendants refer to his snack-bar. And it is "sure-fire".

Before you have settled on to a stool, a glass of iced soda water is plumped on the counter. The order, which can vary from doughnuts and coffee to a full-sized meal, is received and executed as if the life of the attendant depends on immediate "delivery of the goods". With the executed order comes a ticket "punched" against the amount due to the cash desk on your way out. In short the whole idea of the American lunch-counter is to "save your time".

After lunch I found myself nearing the Barclay again, and alongside the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel.

Its predecessor—the "old Waldorf"—which once occupied the site of the Empire State Building, was history to the Americans and for thirty-five years one of their finest hotels. And here was the new version—

I found it buzzing and palatial—an inflated version of my conception of a big hotel.

At the cocktail bar I thought of Huey Long, the Louisiana 'dictator'. Yesterday, according to the Press, this cheery Senator had gathered a convivial group here and had mixed

them a 'julep' the Southern way amidst cries of "Shake it, Huey!" "Give it that Dixie in in mph!" "Take it to Town, boy!"

And to-day he was said to have charged in the U.S. Senate that his death had been plotted at a secret meeting in New Orleans

Yes, despite the genial "party" at this cocktail bar, he had his enemies, as the Louisiana lady passenger of the *SS Manhattan* had intimated

On September 8th, whilst I was in Ecuador, Senator Huey P ("Kingfish") Long was shot at Baton Rouge, Louisiana, by Dr Carl Weiss, aged twenty nine years, who was in turn slain by the State police. The assassin was son in law to a leader of the anti Long faction

Long was shot as he walked from the Chamber of the Louisiana House of Representatives where he had been directing the passage of bills aimed to strengthen his grip on the policies of the State and to fight the New Deal and Roosevelt policies

He died on September 10th

In the body of Weiss were found sixty-one bullet holes. Senator Long was buried in the new plaza of the State capitol at Baton Rouge. A coroner's jury found on September 16th that Dr Weiss' wounds were "homicidally inflicted"

"You haven't had your teeth into very much of the Town," observed a member of the expedition, that evening

"There seems to have been a lot to do," I commented, "and I've a regiment of trunk lids—"

"Forget the lids—carry them aboard as they are—"

"And these boxes," I pointed to a part of the suite categorized usually as a "private drawing room", but now resembling the basement of a warehouse. "How can they possibly reach the *Santa Barbara* by sailing time to-morrow?"

"Somebody's contracted to do it, so why should you care? Come on, this town's just waiting to be torn apart—"

Five minutes later some of the boxes were already streaming out through the door

So I went.

I LEFT ENGLAND

If the "town" was torn apart, it was done unobtrusively
 Yet the following morning I should have found it difficult to
 suggest that I had seen nothing of New York

Beginning with clam chowder in a Greenwich Village cray
 fish bar, followed by an introduction to Jack Dempsey's
 Restaurant, cafés of varied nationalities came and went, inter-
 spersed with some extraordinary taxicab rides "Minimum
 speed here is forty," I was told This, of course, was only in
 certain sections of the city

I don't know whether you've ever engaged the open horse-
 drawn landau which waits all night for fares, usually at the
 southern end of Central Park

"How much right around?" three of us asked the whiskered
 top hatted cabby as we patted the bored horse

At a settled price of four dollars fifty cents the four wheeler
 set off to encircle the Park just as the dawn was breaking

Occasional strains of dance music came from the illuminated
 hotel roof tops and pent houses, bordering the Park

The horse seemed relieved for some break in the monotony
 The cabby seemed indifferent to the fact that this slow jog
 through the surprisingly well kept gardens was to mean an
 additional eighteen shillings to his pocket

The atmosphere had more than a nip as we dawdled past
 little lakes and well groomed hedges The fact that the City
 was just awaking—the crispness of the dewy air and the com-
 parative silence of this zero hour—coupled with this peaceful
 mode of transport, gave me something more than that spring
 chicken feeling Although I had always known that there had
 been a 'twin' to our Cleopatra's Needle on the Thames
 Embankment—it surprised me to find it in Central Park

The very charming girl sitting between Jan and myself
 moved forward until she was half kneeling on the seat behind
 the cabby

"What a nice old horse—what's its name?"

No answer

"I said what is the name of your horse?"

No reply

She turned to us

"I think he's dead "

She leant further over to look at his face

"He's asleep "

"Well, wake him "

"I don't like to "

"He's not earning his four fifty if he's sleeping "

"All right " She gave him an imperceptible dig

"Hey, there, sleepy, what's your horse's name?"

"Uh ?" Then after some thought "Mary "

"So's mine—shake "

"Huh?"

"Shake—my name's Mary "

She took one of his hands when he made no effort to comply

"Does Mary eat much?" asked the other Mary

"Like uh horse," was the reply

"Oh!"

"Well, you had it coming to you——"

Mary sat back between us laughing

The trip took an hour It had been a tonic for us, but the horse was yawning

"Better than sleep," we agreed as we stepped down to think about breakfast

Then I remembered my unconquered trunks That I was sailing for Ecuador in five hours' time——

With two anticipatory "bell hops" as pall bearers, my newly-acquired trunk ("genu-cyne steel—three fifty quick") was marched to the edge of the kerb, the un Venus like "duffle" was flung diffidently into the cab, and I murmured "S S *Santa Barbara*—Brooklyn," feeling that now it had begun

But it hadn't—at least not yet I put it to the driver that I wanted to buy a Spanish English dictionary, and to ask about a book on Ecuador This business took time

After the first stop I had acquired a pocket Collins, but after three "starts" was still without the other "Ecuador?" the woman in the last small shop had begun "Where——?"

The Brooklyn Bridge

As we drove over it, I thought of the film *The Bowery*, and of

George Raft's "high dive" from the spanning structure for a wager

The dockland streets that I drove through were like those of many world ports—untidy, unthought of, a cupboard skeleton that a city championing cleanliness chose to forget

The *Santa Barbara's* orchestra, wrapt in what must have been one of its more animated dervishes, was conscientiously creating a Latin atmosphere as I stepped aboard from the Brooklyn pier

When the blast of that high powered rumba first pervaded my spinal system, my mind digressed and detected abstract South American smells

Strange spices—it assured me—permeated the decks on which I trod

A large basket of hot house flowers, stood shaded by a door opposite the gangway

'A la Señora—

*Passajera boque de vapor 'Santa Barbara',
Brooklyn, Nueva York, E E U U'*

"Enviamos todos nos amos " the attached card began

You are right, my curiosity was rampant, but at the time my knowledge of the language was at a minimum. Yet my imagination caught at the fact that it was Spanish and sped away at a tangent on geographically coloured wings

Ever since my arrival in New York, I had been gradually absorbing, or at least feeling that I was absorbing, the spirit of South America. And now it amused me to think that, within an hour, I should be "rolling down" to—well, I still wasn't quite sure what, but my confused British mind toyed with a phantasm of bull fights, Mexican hats, olive skins, and—of course—the inevitable dusky-eyed *señoritas*

And nobody had yet produced any disillusioning evidence that this Latin mecca was other than as I was imagining it

On the contrary

A hovering reporter sprayed me with dramatisms, concerning our Ecuadorian programme, querying whether I should carry one revolver or two

I explained that I always missed anyway, and that two light revolvers would not assist mountain climbing or runs from Upper Amazon crocs. There actually was a time, however, when I did eventually carry two.

Looking at the cabin number I decided that it certainly was one that I had been allotted for the voyage, despite the fact it was already occupied. The sounds that were coming rough the door paralleled those that I expected to hear in the Ecuadorian jungles, so I thought that I might as well investigate.

"... Who?"

"Alasdair Loch."

"Ho—come on in."

I found myself in the thick of a very convivial meeting. Further entrances brought to my mind that 'mushroom' size which swept across the Atlantic to England—

Knock! Knock!

"Who is it—?"

"Jenkins!"

"Jenkins who?"

"Jenkins of the —— *Herald*!"

"Come on in."

Then again—

"*New York Times*"

"Come in!"

Sardines must feel just a little bored after a month of it, I reflected, but it's very pleasant ("dash more soda, Jan!) to celebrate a ship's departure—

An abridgement of one of the articles published by the *New York Times* on the day we sailed runs as follows:

TO FIND WILD MEN
EXPLORER TO SEARCH AMAZON VALLEY FOR LITTLE KNOWN
SIAMELA INDIANS
A TRIBE OF FIGHTERS
THEIR TERRITORY HAS NEVER BEEN PENETRATED BEFORE
BY WHITE MEN

"When the Grace liner *Santa Barbara* sails from New York to-day, for Guayaquil, Ecuador, it will carry among its passengers leader of the *Andes Amazon Expedition* and four of his aides. The purpose of the expedition is to establish contact with the Ssabela Indians. Records fail to show that white men ever trod the tribes' territory in the Upper Amazon Valley, somewhere between the Napo and Curaray Rivers.

"The captain and his aides, who will be joined in Guayaquil by five additional members of the party, said that they planned to travel by mountain railway, motor truck, mule, pack carrier, rafts and Indian canoes. They will cross the perpetual snow-line of the Andes and finally reach the Amazon Valley, where the real work of the expedition will begin.

"Despite their invisibility the Indians will be nearly hidden behind natural screens, watching avidly every movement of the expedition.

"When a hut is found a member of the expedition will leave a gift at its entrance.

"When the gift has been taken away by the Indians the party member will return with another gift. Finally, after two or three weeks, the explorers will appear outside the hut, displaying their gifts openly.

"The expedition will also attempt to locate a lake between the peaks of the mountain Cerro Hermoso, where, according to legend, the Incas buried a vast treasure about four hundred years ago. The group will also chart territory over which they pass, secure fossils and samples of mineral deposits, zoological specimens and other items of scientific interest."

But the Grace liner, *Santa Barbara*, sailing on that day for Ecuador did *not* carry among its passengers the leader of the *Andes Amazon Expedition*.

Eric decided at the last minute that he had sufficient business to attend to in New York to warrant another week's stay.

So he cancelled his booking, unofficially.

Having fixed the date of departure for the expedition several months beforehand, he had little intention of allowing reporters to attach any adverse criticism to the necessary post-

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ponement of his personal sailing date. So he decided not to announce it to those press men on board

'News hawks' as they are termed, in America, are known for their habits of lingering and pier jumping on steamers

So that after the expedition had been grouped, filmed and interviewed on the top deck against the distant Manhattan skyline, it amused me to see Eric outlining his plans in the bowels of the ship, some time after the "All ashore" signal

How he managed to slip back to the pier without being seen I failed to discover, and I asked him some months afterwards if he had been spotted by any of these reporters

"Very nearly by one," was his reply, "but I dodged behind a pillar

Which amused me again, for the idea of Eric hiding from anybody had its lighter side

CHAPTER VI

"THAT crazy city," muttered Jan, who had come to see us off, as across the water New York—a gawky New York from this angle—bathed and glinted in the burning sunshine

Fifteen minutes later we were ploughing away from it—South America bound

As the *Santa Barbara* trailed torn paper streamers untidily past Bedloe's Island, I asked a fellow deck rail idler for more facts concerning its Statue of Liberty

"How? I began

"Set up there in 1886 Took time Sixty Froggies worked on it for ten years They certainly did a wonderful job A sculptor guy, Bartholdi, fixed a life size model first, then he enlarged it four times—maybe five"

"Certainly more than four or five"

"Sure, but his method was to sectionally divide the model first, then to multiply the measurements of each piece, stretched thin copper across those enlarged sections, then built them to a smaller edition of our lady up there"

"As a check before casting the larger figure, I suppose?"

"Yep—after this check up, he let himself go Did it in plaster, took wooden moulds This time beat heavier copper over the wood I believe they strengthened those pieces with insulated iron"

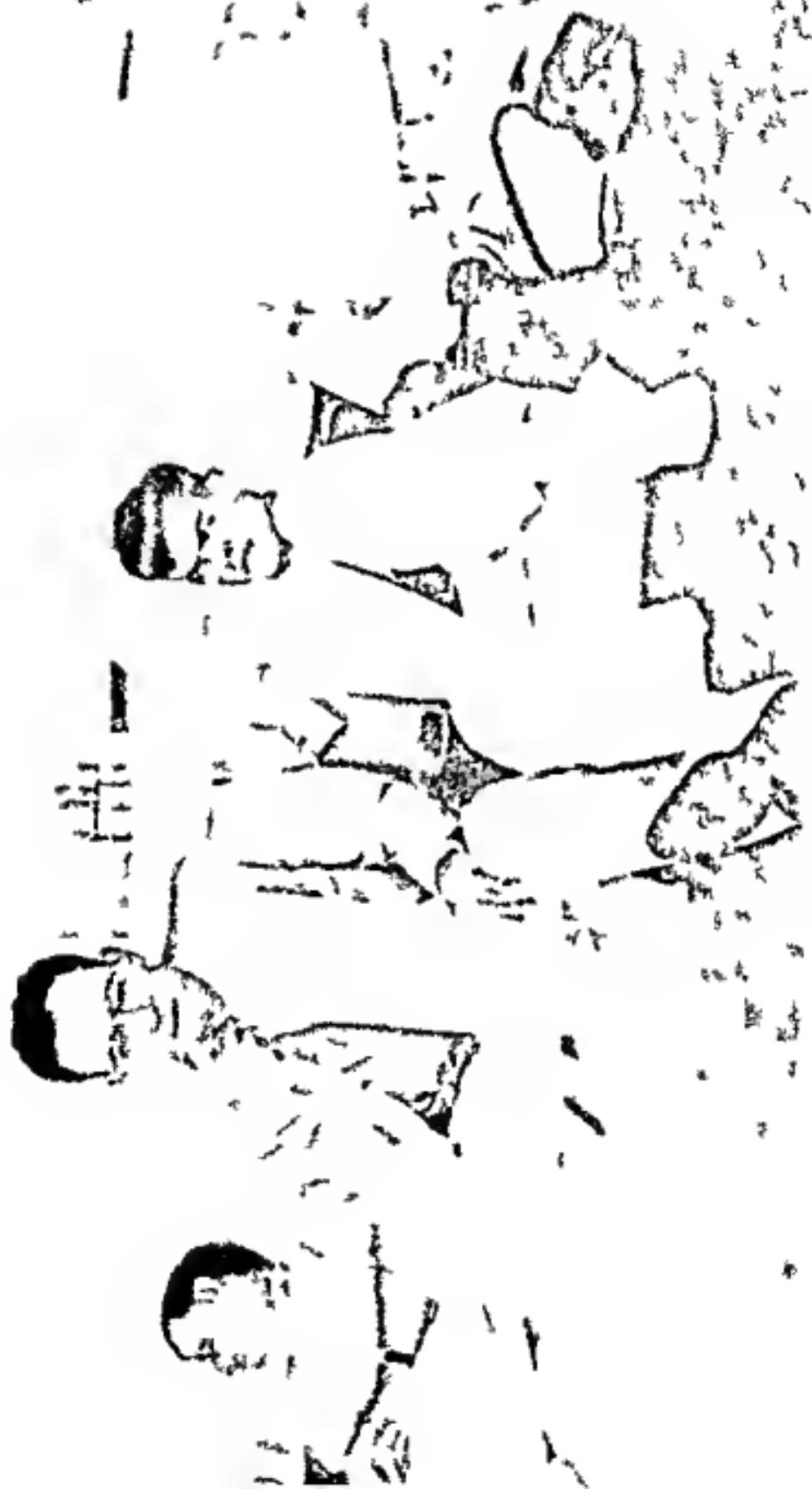
"The measurements must have been precise to risk enlarging an error"

"Measurements—they say there were nine thousand taken Sure, the job was precise"

"And then when the time came to fit this jig saw together?"

"Ran an iron frame up in Paris Sure the whole thing was done in France Each section of 'Liberty' was bolted inside the frame, until they had her as you see her"

"What a cargo to ship across the Atlantic"



"Yep, but again in sections. The lady came in wooden cases. Set her up piece by piece on that pedestal—certainly—and the pedestal is sixty five feet high. But the head had been exhibited over here before—"

"I can see at least three expressions on her face "

"Yeah. Bet she's smiling right back at us Americans and our Liberty. Knows we've gotten more than we can use "

"Staffed with women and Chinks "

My London Southampton train friend from the other *Santa Barbara* had not expressed himself well

American stewardesses dressed neatly and with colour made each meal a bright event in the day

States born Chinese stewards of the bar, the lounges and the decks were white-clad, polite, and efficient

Days came and went without the usual atmosphere of a ship proceeding to the tropics, for it had been excessively hot all the way from Brooklyn

The "definite South American" types were not so very definite. It was explained to me that race prejudices were not sufficiently strong in the western part of the southern continent to prevent the blending of its masses. I was never quite sure, when basking in the charm of these Latin Americans, whether I was conversing with a half Indian, a pure-blooded Castilian, a twenty per cent Jew, or a quarter Panamanian negro.

Sounds a little extreme perhaps, but I found it so on this, my first trip through the West Indies to Ecuador

When I tried to pin a label on one passenger, he exclaimed violently

"Spanish? From Spain? Hell no, I'm an American. My grandfather would have beaten up the man who said he was anything but."

Yet he admitted to a "half Mexican grandmother on the other side"

But in all my mental debates concerning the nationality of the passengers, I usually found that I ended where I had begun.

There was the loose limbed little man whose coal black curls and mustachios were as freely lubricated as his joints. It was

always his pleasure to idle trunk-clad on the edge of the 'pool' until the approach of an audience to the Palm Court rails above gave him his cue to challenge the most un-aquatic swimmer. One could be unfailingly assured of his presence if the 'group' at any time included a lady "travelling alone."

As I overheard such an unchaperoned passenger remark resignedly one 'morning after'—

"Why did you *leave* whilst he was there?"

Then there were the Honey mooners occupying the appropriate suite, who claimed the U.S. as their nation. It had taken me some time to reach any conclusion regarding this couple before I learnt that they were "Americans". When I thought of the bride my mind dwelt on Latin Jewish blood. And the groom, I regarded, as a Cornishman with Scandinavian infusions.

They were a witty pair and spent much of this honeymoon voyage good humouredly deriding my first name which they hadn't heard before.

"That's what we'll call our first," they chided.

I told them that they "hadn't heard nothin', yet", but did not give them the satisfaction of learning that I had an ultra Gaelic minded parent and a few more initials to spare.

But speaking of Cornishmen—there was the mining man, his wife and small daughter, who had also travelled with me on the *Manhattan*.

Discovering that we had both studied at the Camborne School of Mines we discussed his 'land of honey' and St. Austell "bitter".

I introduced these people to the expedition and we were given some valuable hints concerning the country which we were to penetrate.

There was the party of Americans ("getting away at Panama") who "liked to get hot". They exercised the ship's pianos—wore out combs and paper until the early hours—and subsequently became the targets for some of the blackest high-powered glances that I've seen cast from any restrained breakfast table—but they amused me.

One passenger especially *not* amused was a titled Frenchman whose brusque emotional Ah's and Oh's, as we swept past the

Cuban coast and, later, through the wonders of the Panama Canal, shook his waxed upper lip growth with such violence that I seemed to spend as much time watching his moustache points, as I did the filling of the locks. When he saw the old French dredges rusting away and abandoned in a side river, tears rolled down his cheeks (this temporarily embarrassed me so that I departed) which, of course, was after we had left Christobal.

As the *Santa Barbara* sidled and reversed in the muddy water around the Christobal docks, I stood on the top deck with Dick, gazing across not very interesting looking country towards nearby Colon.

Dick was in the service of the United States Army, he had been here before.

Three biplanes twisted about above this discoloured entrance to the Canal, broadcasting the chattering intermittent bark which practically all radial engined aircraft emit.

"Trainers," he commented, "the field is over there." He pointed past a sorry looking palm tree, two green branches at the top, fifteen or sixteen brown ones hanging dejectedly over the dead looking trunk. Beneath a place where two or three bedraggled smoky clouds blended easily with a sky of practically the same colour, a plane was rumbling into a drome which looked about a mile from us, at what seemed to be a high landing speed.

"No trainer—that, one of our latest pursuit ships."

The sun barely filtered through the increasing number of straggling grey clouds and the haze over Christobal didn't cheer what I felt to be a disappointing first sight of this doorway to the Canal.

I should not have tendered my thanks to anyone in a sufficiently authoritative position to have ordered me off the *Santa Barbara* for a year's stay in Christobal. Even when I went ashore my opinion varied very little.

Soon after the ship docked two women reporters of the *Panama Star and Herald* came aboard. They were surprised that Eric was not there, and showed us that the expedition had been occupying space in their paper for some time.

I felt very guilty when I read that they had described me as

an "aviator and navigator". I had approximately only twenty five hours solo to my credit, and once had owned a canoe

Christobal reminded me of Port Said, one noticeable difference being that here at the beginning of the Canal fewer land-sharks encouraged me to buy

Motor car hire at every tropical port, however, never seems to vary very much, the fare is usually several dollars, rupees, piastres or shillings above the originally agreed price

I was surprised at the number of 'pony-buggies'—such as are found at Gibraltar

My afternoon at Colon passed with the purchase of a mess jacket (the cut of which forever removed the possibility that I might wear it other than in a jungle) a "mint julep" at the Hotel Washington, and subsequent exultation at having for once lived up to the alleged tendency of the Scot, I had seen a lot and had spent "vera little" ashore

But apart from its Hindu section, the sleepy town had not been conducive to heavy spending

One cannot say the same about the evening. Vivacious night shrouded Christobal differs so much from its slumbering self by day

From the time that you step on to the half lighted wooden dock and sidle or bound out of the way of plunging netted bales, everything is different

The warehouse on the dock, through which the passengers must pass, is immediately responsive to the darkness that drops upon the port. Previously languid, musty and unpleasant to inhale, it enlivens at once into an odd, animated setting of weirdness

Its atmosphere seems, and is, "spice permeated", and through this, visitors and sight-seers parade between bales and unpacked Fords in evening gowns, every moment having to skip from the path of an electric trolley

The "confusion" that you can see on Christobal docks after dark looks the same with or without a coated liver. It is all unreal

As you walk ashore from the warehouse, unrefreshing types

of negroes in charge of big American tourers beckon suggestively. Drivers of horse buggies also pursue this line and illuminating cajolery and argument is employed to capture a fare.

There seemed to be very little of this intense competition by day, the apparently disinterested attitude of the drivers then being a lazy "Take you if you want to go, but—"

They know that the majority of their daytime fares usually ride little more than the half mile to the Hindu shop fronts.

By night their opportunities to exploit the tourist—especially the sensation-seeking type—are infinite—

The town seemed to be over run—not by its inhabitants nor by giggling celebrating tourists—

But what appeared to be the whole of the United States land and sea forces descended on Colon when the lights began to shine.

The streets were dotted with khaki and white drill revellers spilling through and from the swing doors of blazing *cantinas*.

It seemed that all the garish lighting—abandoned as "too fierce" by the rest of the world—had been set up both outside and inside the saloons.

The Navy and Army shouted against the thunder of crescendo-reaching trumpets. The exertion with which they punched, bargained, and rumba'd sent many "sober minded" tourists into ice-cold sweats.

Little fuzzy and straight haired Panamanian dance "dolls" formed the centre of many near brawls. It seemed to be a case of "You boys got no more. Okay, this is where we get off."

And they would, moving on to the next table to drape themselves around another party.

The companionship of these "partners" appeared to be only for the fittest surviving payroll.

"How the hell can I send any of it home," complained a sailor returning shortly to his Texas "small town."

At the same time across the table Dick was concluding dealings with a negro waiter.

"Would you care to match up?" I heard him demand.

"Okay," said the negro, turning away, "outside—I'm ready when I've served these other men."

"There'll be a dead nigger in just ten minutes," said Dick, as he looked at his watch

The old game of the waiter charging extra per round when he found that any proffered bill was being paid without question. It all ended, however, with a refund.

Back aboard the ship again I received a telegram. It was from a distant cousin on British Government service in Panama, suggesting that I should dine with him next evening.

I had previously never met him. He, apparently, had read my name amongst those on the published list of expedition members.

The vessels now proceeded up the Canal or, geographically speaking, down it.

The old catch as to the direction in which you are moving as you pass from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

I consulted the ship's large-scale map again to convince myself that we were sailing more or less south-east, not west, although, of course, the general supposition of some "in the know" is that a Pacific bound ship sails *east*.

What impressed me about the Canal was the extraordinary efficiency of it all, the upward motion of a powerful electric lift, as the gigantic steel gates closed silently and mysteriously, and an immense volume of frothing water, elevated us to daylight from the canyon of the locks.

The neatness of the U S Canal Zone camps was impressive. The giants who parade along the locks in well-cut khaki trooper-type uniform looked MEN and were.

But in extraordinary contrast to all this neat efficiency, wild tangled jungle often bordered the Canal between each set of locks.

"Why go to Ecuador for wild men?" chuckled a passenger who had read of our intentions in a paper bought at Christobal. "Plenty waiting armed with their bows, only fifteen miles through there."

I told him not to spoil our fun and that we'd probably come back for these.

Lunch was served on deck so that we could see this green spectacle of "nature in the raw".

"What a job they must have had to stamp out malaria with all this so close," commented one of the few other English passengers

Half way along the Canal it is recorded on one of the rocky walls, which tower on either side of the ship, that the United States Government underwent its greatest engineering difficulty at that spot Culebra Cut

There is also a small waterfall on the left, as you move towards Balboa and the Pacific, which seemed at one time to be only twenty feet away, but it was probably much more

Before passing through the Canal, a special pilot 'takes over' the bridge

The powerful electric engines that travel on a terraced track beside the locks, tightening and slackening the ship's guide ropes, work under the direction of this special Canal pilot

The Captain is possibly biting his nails on one side—and again, he is probably not

The way in which these guide engines crawled languidly up and down the near vertical inclines at the end of each lock seemed to contradict gravity. The grinning American peak capped drivers watched the gaping mouths, first above and then below them, with bored amusement. There were others among them who were merely bored and drove their engines as if in a blur and seeing nothing

Finally we reached the end of the Canal at Balboa. The *Santa Barbara* drew in to dock at about seven thirty in the evening, and although it was dark we could see the Pacific beyond. Nearby were two of the regular passenger seaplanes in which the length of the Canal could be flown for seven dollars, and Army planes crackled overhead in the darkness. Well, I decided, I'm glad that I didn't go with Peter —

"Peter the Botanist" had decided to cross the Isthmus by train and drop off at various stations, to pursue butterflies

It was all botany as far as we were concerned

CHAPTER VII

WHEN Morgan plundered Old Panama he really started something. For ever since then treasure has been associated with the ruins of the city.

Its wealth and the wealth of its citizens at the time of Morgan's raid has always been theoretical as there were no records of any individual riches.

However at the time Panama was the home of some of the wealthiest families of New Spain and certainly one of the richest cities.

Here the Genoese slave dealers made their headquarters and stored their immense fortunes.

Old Panama's churches became the depositories for treasure gained in one way or another by devout Catholics from the various Latin Americas of that period.

The Isthmus had every reason to be at that time one of the greatest treasure-coffers of the world. It was the starting point for many expeditions to the gold ridden Incas kingdom. Many plundering sea-craft used Panama Harbour as a base.

A few years ago an English company set out to recover any part of the treasures that might be still hidden on the Isthmus among the old ruins.

Their equipment included electrical gold seeking apparatus and they chose the old site of San José church.

A casket was discovered containing, among other things, a golden crucifix. But the exultation on the part of the searchers did not last when their activities were arrested by a quick thinker who produced documents to prove his ownership of the land and ruins. This individual successfully backed his claim that the government had no right to have issued the treasure-seeking concession.

Everything went against these treasure hunters and even the

recovered golden crucifix slipped through their fingers as the result of some "legal" twist

In despair they ceased operations and went home

But a treasure which existed in old San José and can be seen to-day in the newer church of that name was one of the temptations that lured Morgan to Old Panama. This was the golden altar

Just before the raid San José was known as the richest church. All the holy vessels were of gold or gem studded silver

At news of Morgan's approach, the padres of the city, knowing that the churches would be the first goal of the buccaneer, stripped these holy buildings of anything of value and hid the treasure. In some cases it was sent away in boats

But not so with San José. Instead of being caught up in the wave of hysterical terror sweeping Panama, its priests remained outwardly calm and carefully closed the doors of their church

When the pirates ultimately descended on San José they found the padres praying beside a plain white altar, set with cheap looking candlesticks and ornaments

Jerked to their feet the white-faced priests admitted to possessing "nothing that is not here within sight"

They were kicked aside by a glaring disappointed Morgan who had heard of "wonderful treasures within this church" and who found a very impoverished looking altar covered with apparently valueless ornaments

The treasures of the church escaped the buccaneers. By little short of a miracle San José withstood the fire when the city was burnt by the pirates

What was the secret of these friars of old Panama? How did they preserve their treasures from Morgan? It was simple but ingenious—

White paint had covered the golden altar, plaster and more paint the candelabra, the chalices, and all the valuable ornaments

The result of a little calm thought amidst a great deal of panic

All the Panamanian lore swept through my head as I leant over the *Santa Barbara's* deck rail and—with probably two hundred others—watched the lighted wharf side closer

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"Come on, Al, we'll get a cab and shake up Panama "

"Sorry, but a cousin "

"Yeah, I know, but a guy who's lived here nine years
Panama in the palm of his hand "

"Yes, I'll be letting a great chance slip by . . . but I'd like to
meet this cousin "

"Get away from relatives see Panama We're hiring
a big cab "

I compromised and rode with the big car from Balboa to
the middle of 'flare' and neon lighted Panama—Panama with
its traffic that drove on the left as did our own in England

Whilst we had hunted for the largest car in the big parking
court near the Balboa wharves, nearby drivers of dilapidated
motor buses had wheedled and cajoled with the crowd coming
from the direction of the ship, for the privilege of driving
them "into town"

"Hey—pull up here but you're going to muss every-
thing, Al "

"Track you fellows down later "

But I didn't see them again until the "morning after" when
the bows of the *Santa Barbara* were cleaving the blue Pacific

It only occurred to me that traffic was "driving on the left",
when I had taken another cab I suppose Panama has its
reasons

We drove to the outskirts of the city and ran along the sea
wall for a while Finally the car turned into a quiet avenue
which was obviously part of a residential quarter, and I found
that we had reached the address that had been telegraphed to
me

Despite the fact that my cousin and his charming sister were
Scottish, their house emanated a suggestion of everything that
was "English" At the intersection of two New World con-
tinents where everything was savagely 'American', I could not,
in the ordinary way, have conceived that such preservation of
'home atmosphere' was possible Furthermore I had been
slipping into the relaxed ways of American living and had not
considered 'dressing'

The Empire News came over the air well and through it we

I learnt that Wiley Post and Will Rogers had been killed flying in an Alaskan fog.

From the interior of his Austin saloon my cousin showed me the Pacific, old Panama, and new San José.

As we drove towards the ship through modern Panama and Balboa, I wondered whether my friends with "Panama in the palm of their hand" were seizing more than I.

Zig zagging through the warehouse between bales, cases, newly landed cars and bags stacked one on top of the other, the Austin finally pulled up at the bottom of the gang plank.

My cousin and I shook hands and I walked up on to an almost deserted *Santa Barbara*.

A few people—perhaps two or three—were chinking ice against the sides of their glasses in the veranda café.

One of them, a lady passenger, described the evening as being "insufferably close—too warm to be ashore."

I disagreed with her—it was too hot to stay aboard ship. We were not sailing until the 'early hours'.

It took just a moment's hesitation to decide whether I too should finish the evening chinking ice, with my feet on the deck rail.

It seemed unsporting to go back into Panama after having been driven so carefully by my cousin to the foot of the gangway. Yet I thought that I might as well see a little of the city night life and perhaps meet a scattered "Expedition". However, I did neither.

On entering the town again I stepped out of the car and walked aimlessly along. All my enthusiasm to see a gay Panama seemed to have left me. I was rapidly reaching the conclusion that my friend of the *Santa Barbara* had been right after all, it was too hot to really take an interest in things ashore.

Peanut vendors, sellers of sickly looking candy and alternately blasts of sound from the *cantinas* moved past me as idly I walked through the garish streets.

Occasionally one was not as well lit as another and remarks (I guessed at me) would be gabbled in Spanish from the gloom beyond shadowed doorways.

At one time, taking a short darkened cut from one lighted

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street to another where there seemed to be a lot of traffic, I heard footsteps behind me—stealthy, padded footsteps that one might have read about in a "London-after midnight" thriller

Secretive, breathless Spanish in my ears

I threatened the pander who had been following me

"*Vamos*," I was able to scowl. It was about the only Spanish word that I knew. I was pleased to have at my finger tips one that saved argument. I thought it meant "scram"

Afterwards I learnt that it meant "Let's go", which explained the incident that followed

Finally when my throat refused entry to a very warm beer, I rose from the messy drink splashed glass table and leaving the blatant *cantina* I returned to the ship

I had not seen any of my friends. Others were returning as well when I walked up the gang plank for the second time. I felt tired and temporarily disinterested in Panama. I crawled to bed

Opening eyes to the following morning was rather like waking to a Christmas of the years before my teens

Everything to cheer the soul of Redskin minded youth lay piled new and shining on the two chairs shared by Peter the Botanist, and myself

Revolver holsters, a revolver belt, a 'money pouch', there may even have been a bow and arrow, certainly a lot of native souvenirs which, if we'd known it, were to be better available in Ecuador

A sleeping hulk of husky Germanic American flesh that was Peter had apparently been with the party which had 'beld Panama in its hand'! Was there anything that this fellow hadn't bought? I looked with certain envy at his colourful purchases and for no definite reason suddenly thought of Panama hats. Why, when I had been on the spot, had I not thought of obtaining the real thing?

Some enlightened person informed me very patiently that day that Panama hats did not "come from Panama" but—Ecuador

I suppose the Pacific really looks like any other ocean. Possibly every other ocean can produce the same colourings, although I should always dispute this. But, as far as I am concerned, the Pacific will always be the Pacific—different from the rest.

Perhaps it is because the Pacific washes "the East", and New Worlds. Perhaps it is because (as I should think more probable) it has been my good luck to spend years sunning myself on its golden beaches, gazing out at its blue rollers.

I have been flung on my head and slammed on one of these beautiful sandy stretches by the fierce friendliness of the largest and "bluest" roller that it was ever my misfortune to attempt to "shoot"——

I have seen monster waves of this ocean carry thousands crest high through the sun and leave these thousands stranded above the golden waterline.

If you have ever seen the supreme glory of a full rigged three masted barque threading its slightly rolling way through the Pacific before a warm breeze, with its bows cleaving a white furrow through the rich "blue"——

If you have ever slid between the Pacific's coral islands, especially up through the Great Barrier Reef off Australia's eastern coastline and seen its sea snakes, giant sharks, its flying fish, all playing along the top of its sparkling waters—then you will be as fond of it as I am. You will think that you could recognize it—know it—if led blind folded to several oceans.

Why, you will say, cannot the Atlantic—or for a second comparison, the Indian Ocean—supply these colours, this sparkle, this combination of fierce effort and gentle beauty, this "everything" that is the Pacific?

Possibly it can. Though to me it never will. I expect because the Pacific "got there first". But I have never seen a beautiful Atlantic, although I have ploughed my way across and through it, although I have bathed, yachted and fished in it several times.

Nassau! Nassau!—I can hear "Bahamas lovers" shouting. But then I can only say I am sorry, I have never called at Nassau. I have not yet seen the beaches of "Rio" and the

rest of eastern South America. All my early associations were, as I must inevitably repeat, with the Pacific——

And when I looked through the porthole over Peter's carcase the morning after leaving Panama, I felt that I could smell, feel and "see" the difference in the plunging combers that slapped against the *Santa Barbara*.

Imagination? Pacific prejudice? Perhaps——

Although we were out of sight of land there was a very definite South American atmosphere about the ship.

"Why not," you might ask; "you said that this fact was noticeable the moment you embarked at Brooklyn"

Yes, it had seemed so. In contrast to New York the ship had certainly flavoured of things Spanish, but after a day at sea I seemed to meet only Americans. The South Americans on board kept very much to themselves.

And the orchestra, which had played a rumba with such tropical gusto whilst the *Santa Barbara* lay alongside the Brooklyn wharf, seemed to shed its Latin tempo after leaving New York harbour.

Now, however, a very evident dash of the southern continent pervaded the ship. Possibly the last lock of the Panama Canal shutting off New York and the Atlantic plus its "rest-of-the-world" contacts was having a psychological effect on the passengers from both North and South America. Perhaps it was because the Honey-mooners and holiday makers had left the *Santa Barbara* at Panama

Whatever it was I found it impossible to suppose—even when I experimented with my imagination—that I was not journeying down the South American coast at all, but heading towards China, Australia or California—anywhere in fact other than the direction in which I was actually travelling.

Perhaps the real reason for this was the return to life of the South Americans who had probably felt like fish out of water in the Atlantic.

In any case they became obvious, that is to say, they did not remain quietly in their little groups. They became gay, they played deck games, they danced, they achieved attitudes which suggested that they were of importance in their own countries.

Meanwhile those Americans on board who had still clung to that "on leave" spirit all the way down the Atlantic coasts, even to Panama, now wore a dejected look as if to say with resignation "All this over again"

Some, however, were quite glad to return to South America

"After a couple of leaves," they said, "you are glad to get back to be the big man in your little tin pot republic—after the first shock of finding that you're small time stuff in the States"

"And after a few years in South America," chimed in another, "you'll find that you just don't fit in back home—no, Suh, you certainly don't"

CHAPTER VIII

"WELL, I'm looking for something on Incas——"

The library steward of the forward lounge moved between the two glass cases, separated by a wide electrical hearth.

"Conquest — Conquest — Con — came back yesterday — m-hm, here it is—gives you the whole works——"

He handed me a large volume.

"The *Conquest of Peru?* Peru? Afraid that my Incas will be *Ecuadorian* . . . I think . . . getting off to-morrow . . ."

"Ecuador? Why Inca Peru included all Ecuador *and* some more . . . Bolivia . . . Chile . . ."

I took the book and turned to the nearest calico-covered easy chair.

"If you're landing at Guayaquil, you want to whale into it . . . fine record . . . tells just how Pizarro put those Incas in a spot . . ."

I opened the green cover and noticed that the book was by Prescott——

"The Empire of Peru," I read, "at the time of the Spanish invasion, stretched along the Pacific from about the second degree north to the thirty-seventh degree of south latitude."

I remembered that the equator ran through Ecuador slightly to the north of Quito the capital—that "the second degree north" should consequently correspond with the most northerly part of the country.

"The thirty-seventh degree of south latitude." Surely that would be somewhere about the middle of present-day Chile.

And what of this Pizarro who led the invasion, which resulted in the consequent collapse of the Incan Empire—exactly who, and "what", was he?

Francisco Pizarro, I learnt, was born at Trujillo, a "city of Estremadura in Spain", towards the end of the fifteenth century. Because he was illegitimate his actual birth-date was not recorded. It was said that he received little care from his parents, and that they deserted him.

Pizarro had no early education and his chief occupation was that of swineherd.

But the highly-coloured tales regarding life in the "New World" captured his imagination and he finally made his way to Seville, the "port where the Spanish adventurers embarked to seek their fortunes in the West".

He was next heard of in the New World at the island of Hispaniola in 1510, establishing a name for himself on various expeditions. He co-operated with Balboa in establishing the settlement of Darien, and was among the first Europeans to be "greeted with the long promised vision of the Southern Ocean".

More expeditions

It was in 1515, when he was selected to trade with natives on the shores of the Pacific for gold and pearls among the neighbouring islands that, "as his eye ranged along the shadowy line of coast till it faded in the distance", his imagination may have been first fired with the idea of one day attempting the conquest of the mysterious regions beyond the mountains.

In 1521 Pascual de Andagoya, a "cavalier of much distinction in the colony of Panama", led an expedition southwards, but he did not get far and bad health caused him to return in the same year.

But the stories that he brought back of the opulence of the countries to the south created a craze for such expeditions. Yet most of the tales told by Andagoya appear to have been based on supposition—his own supposition.

An agreement between Diego de Almagro, a soldier of fortune—Hernando de Luque, a Spanish ecclesiastic, and Francisco Pizarro—culminated in the departure of an expedition in November, 1524, captained by Pizarro, consisting of a hundred men mostly recruited from the hangers-on of the Isthmus.

De Luque chiefly financed this expedition. Almagro was to follow Pizarro in a smaller ship as soon as it could be fitted out.

Unfortunately for Pizarro's party it was the rainy season when storms were sweeping the South American "west coast."

His first expedition inland near to Puerto de Pinas, then the most southerly known point, was an unhappy one. Swamps, morass fringed with tangled undergrowth—rough rocky country—heat—lack of food, distressed the men. Yet Pizarro did what he could to revive their spirits and with them returned to his ship to proceed further south.

But storms—the depressing coastline—but chiefly shortened rations, created a discontent to a point where Pizarro decided that it would be wisest to send his ship back for supplies in the charge of a man named Montenegro, who took with him half the company.

The men left behind lived on shell fish and berries, some of which were poisonous. Many consequently suffered. Pizarro's sympathy with his men and the fact that he readily shared his scanty provisions won their admiration. But a despondency had settled upon them as the weeks wore on—twenty of the party had died—and expectation that the ship would ever return, merely flickered occasionally. They called this place Puerto de la Hambre, i.e., Port of Hunger.

Then came the turning point.

News arrived of a "light" having been seen further into the jungle.

The emaciated party plunged through the woods and came upon an Indian village which, much to the surprise of the inhabitants, they immediately plundered for food.

Crude gold ornaments hung about the necks of the natives.

Pizarro with lighted eyes, having annexed what he could of it, learnt from these people of a great and wealthy empire further south—of a monarch living "ten days' trek across the mountains" and of an invasion of his kingdom. Records suggest that they referred to the Inca Huayna Capac's invasion of Quito, which took place several years before Pizarro's journey south.

The good fortune of the party culminated in the appearance of Montenegro and the re-provisioned ship six weeks later.

Pizarro's men, thin and worn, soon forgot their troubles after a few days good food and once again were eager to sail on towards this mystery civilization

At their next call inland still further to the south the party came upon an Indian hamlet which had been abandoned at their approach. Here they were delighted to find more gold ornaments, but were at the same time horrified to discover human flesh that had been left roasting by a fire. This sign of cannibalism so upset the party that they decided to leave.

Once again they bugged the coast meeting storms which strained the ship. Anchoring off a point which Pizarro named Punta Quemada, he decided on yet another expedition inland. This resulted in the discovery of a town of even larger size than the previous one.

The Indians fled—the Spaniards collected their gold.

The tribe returned and attacked with arrows and darts. Several of the party were killed, despite their mailed armour. Pizarro himself was wounded in seven places.

The expedition decided to turn back to Panama for the storm-weakened ship to be refitted. Yet when they had reached Chicama, a point on the mainland slightly to the west of Panama, Pizarro decided to disembark with most of his company, feeling that an appearance in Panama at this point would be premature. The ship, however, was despatched to Panama with the gold that had been collected and the ship's treasurer had instructions to report their "successful" discoveries to the Governor.

All this time Pizarro's partner Almagro had been fitting out his own ship in Panama. Eventually with sixty men he followed the sea route which Pizarro was known to have taken. Almagro called at all the points named by his friend—Puerto de Pinas, Puerto de la Hambre, Pueblo Quemada.

He too had "incidents" with Indians—and recovered gold, more gold in fact than Pizarro.

His expedition continued on until he reached the mouth of the river ultimately to be named Rio de San Juan, four degrees above the equator, which means that it was about two degrees north of Ecuador.

The Indian villages he encountered were finer in their construction the further he went south. But perhaps the amount of gold that he had already collected—certainly the distressed conviction that Pizarro had foundered—caused him to return towards Panama.

Calling at the Pearl Islands—a rendezvous of traders—he learnt of Pizarro waiting at Chicama. They met and exchanging reports pledged themselves to die rather than abandon the enterprise.

It was decided that Pizarro should stay where he was and that Almagro should continue on, to lay his case before the Governor of Panama and perhaps obtain further backing from De Luque.

But the Governor, with a rebellion in Nicaragua on his mind, was not disposed to listen to Almagro's colourful report on the amazing quantities of gold to be obtained in South America—he discredited it from the first.

Probably he was biased by tales that had filtered back to Panama of Pizarro's loss of men to Indian spears and starvation.

De Luque who took a more enterprising view turned the Governor's head in favour of Almagro, but was unable to convince him of the worth of Pizarro.

Consequently Almagro was named as Pizarro's equal in the next expedition.

Learning of this Pizarro suspected his friend, and from then viewed him with permanent distrust.

Nevertheless, on March 10th, 1526, an agreement was drawn up between Pizarro, Almagro and De Luque, who agreed to finance the other two to the extent of twenty thousand *pesos*. Each was to have a third of the lands and wealth to be discovered in the south.

Two larger ships were purchased but they found difficulty in obtaining men. Eventually they mustered about one hundred and sixty—as well as a few horses. Their supply of ammunition though inadequate, was better than before. They engaged a good navigator called Bartholomew Ruiz.

The expedition sailed straight to the Rio de San Juan, the most southerly point previously reached by Almagro.

Here in the fine Indian villages they laid their hands on so much gold that Almagro decided to return yet again to Panama for reinforcements, with the plundered gold as a bait to new recruits. Pizarro stayed in open country near the Rio de San Juan and the navigator Ruiz cruised further down to the small island of Gallo, where he had an unfriendly reception from the native inhabitants. So he sailed to what was ultimately called the Bay of St Matthew.

Here he found the Indian population even greater, but there were no signs of hostility.

Once again at sea, he was surprised by the approach of a strange balsa raft with a sail. He was impressed by the ornaments of the several men and women on board and especially by their woollen clothing "of brilliant colouring embroidered with figures of birds and flowers".

Here was proof of an intelligent civilization. Two of the Indians had come from a place called Tumbes, to the south. They claimed that their monarch owned animals which Ruiz recognized from the description as being sheep. They admitted to the considerable use in their kingdom of gold and silver.

Ruiz believed only half of this "information". He sailed on until he had crossed the equator and then turned back to report to Pizarro, taking with him the two Indians from Tumbes.

He found Pizarro having difficulty in finding proper food for his men and in combating fever which had resulted from the penetration of swamps. Shortly after Ruiz arrived, Almagro sailed in from Panama with new men.

The statements supplied by the Indians which Ruiz had brought back with him stimulated the enthusiasms of his friends.

Tumbes. It seemed to ring literally of glittering possibilities. Its description coincided with the Spaniards' pleasantest dream.

There followed a cruise south of both vessels to the coast of what is now Esmeraldas. The appearance of further precious metal and emeralds—the appearance as well of "civilized" townships of a warlike race.

I LEFT ENGLAND

Once again the ships turned back, and it was decided to found a camp further north on the dreary island of Gallo, to be safe from the Indians of the mainland.

At this the crews were inclined towards mutiny. Almagro was to return to Panama for further provisions. Those left behind attempted to send letters back to the Government pleading to be taken off the island.

Almagro burnt these letters, yet a distressed note reached Panama enclosed in a ball of cotton, which had been taken as a specimen to be presented to the "Goveroor's lady".

Two ships were at once sent to bring back the expedition. Revived by the food brought by these ships, the men's sense of proportion returned.

Pizarro dismayed at the thought that his exploration should terminate so soon, traced a line in the sand with his sword from east to west. Turning towards the south, he cried: "Friends and comrades, on that side is toil, hunger, nakedness, the drenching storm, desertion and death; on this side ease and pleasure. There lies Peru with its riches; here, Panama and its poverty. Choose, each man, what best becomes a brave Castilian. For my part I go south." And having said this he stepped across the line. Thirteen men followed him, one of them being Ruiz the navigator.

But Pizarro sent Ruiz back, with the two relief ships, to co-operate with Almagro and Luque. The little party on the island were without a vessel when it was decided to move twenty-five miles northwards to the higher and more habitable island of Gorgona. This was done by raft. While they found edible animals and pheasants on the island, there were as many insects as had tortured them at Gallo.

Meanwhile the two ships reached Panama and the Governor fumed at finding that Pizarro had refused to return.

But Almagro and De Luque after some difficulty managed to persuade him that Pizarro's attitude was in the interests of the Crown, and with reluctance the Governor consented to the despatch of a small ship, with a positive command that Pizarro should return within six months. The ship was to be sent with just enough hands to man her.

"Men's lives are of value," he had raged.

Pizarro and his men were eventually taken off Gorgona by this little vessel, after a seven months' stay on the island

This time, decided Pizarro, there would be no hitch. With the two Indians of Tumbes on board they would sail direct for this alleged "El Dorado". Yet they did not sail direct but put in at several points along the coast

Nevertheless, twenty days after leaving Gorgona, the ship glided into the "waters of the beautiful gulf of Guayaquil"

"Guayaquil to morrow morning at ten," volunteered Peter the Botanist as I took my place for lunch

Struggling to my deck-chair on the *Santa Barbara's* starboard side, in a way which accurately suggested a too well appeased appetite, I again opened the book

The country around the Gulf of Guayaquil, I learnt, had apparently been "studded with towns and villages" at the time of Pizarro's arrival

His party were now abreast of a magnificent range of stupendous heights. A mountain known now as Chumborazo—and another, Cotopaxi, towered their brilliant white domes from a high ridge of the Andes

The Spaniards at length came to anchor off the island of Santa Clara, "lying at the entrance of the Bay of Tumbes".

On the foreshore of the mainland the people of Tumbes gathered, gazing with open eyes at the floating castle

But the inhabitants of this floating castle—what was passing through their minds?

Here in front of them was the alleged El Dorado—would they find it to be so? Had the violent gestures of the Indian's sign language been misinterpreted?

After a visit to the ship by a leader of these people on the shore, a Spanish captain sent one of his own men, Alonso de Molina, accompanied by a negro, to in turn pay the Incas a visit

One is amazed at this repression of impulse. Pizarro apparently did not wish to rush his "prize" and create hostility, as he had on several occasions further north, when his men had massacred their way to the gold of the coastal villages

The Indians on the shore looked in wonderment at De

Molina's beard—they were equally surprised at the colour of his negro's skin

De Molina was shown a temple ornamented with gold and silver to such an extent that Pizarro did not believe his report, and sent a more trustworthy emissary, Pedro de Candia, who reported the same facts

Tumbes was discovered to be a favourite city of the Inca princes. Next to the then recently acquired town of Quito, it was the most important place in Northern Peru. A great Inca Tupac Yupanqui was found to have established a fortress there. And the temple ablaze with precious metal, also a specially large and correspondingly embellished house, had both been erected by the monarch, Huayna Capac.

This "house" was a nunnery occupied by young women known as Virgins of the Sun.

Tumbes was, of course, the first really large and rich Incan city that Pizarro had seen. He discovered that the inhabitants of the district were racially Yungas and had been subjects of a leading power known as the Grand Chimu until they had been conquered by the Incas.

The gods of the Yungas were not replaced by those of the Incas, but occupied important positions in the temples alongside them.

All shrines of worship were heavily inlaid with gold and outstanding among them all was that of a giant "fish god" (cast in this very common metal—gold—and) decorated with emeralds and pearls.

Pizarro found the Incas taking an exceptional interest in an iron hatchet which he presented to one of the leaders. The metal fascinated them. They appeared to be surprised at its hardness, and altogether unfamiliar with iron.

After this the Spanish captain began to realize why gold and silver was so commonly used among the Indians as a "base metal".

Unknown to the Spaniards, the Indians regarded the party and their horses as semi-divinities. Had Pizarro's men not been ignorant of this fact they could have easily acquired a great deal of the treasure about them, merely by asking for it.

Instead their one idea of securing what they saw, was to take possession of it by force

Yet these men realized that their number, which was about a hundred, would have a slender chance in any combat with the several thousand inhabitants of Tumbes

Also this introduction to the Empire of the Incas had encouraged Pizarro to make the expedition even more exploratory. The gold would always be ornamenting the temples and big buildings of Tumbes, the party told themselves. Why encumber the ship now when the storage space could be more suitably used for provisioning?

So Pizarro sailed further south without having molested the city. On his return up the coast De Molina and a few others were left at their own request in Tumbes, and Pizarro set a course for Panama, where it was his intention to recruit a small "Army" to conquer the Incas—and of course win the treasures which he had seen.

But three years slipped by before he again sailed for Peru. In those three years he had been forced to visit Spain in order to secure royal support for his projected conquest. No one will ever really know what happened to the men who were left in Tumbes. Perhaps their gold lust became too great. Perhaps they quarrelled with the Incas—or died from fever.

It is more or less supposed fact that they disclosed to the Indians the true purpose of Pizarro's visit, and that there was nothing immortal about the party.

Pizarro left Panama with a large body of men and a contented feeling. He sailed directly for Tumbes intending to stimulate the adventurous spirit of his new men by acquiring a great deal of treasure from the start.

But once again it was the stormy season and head winds slowed his progress to a standstill. He decided to land his men and rush overland. The ship was to follow along the coast when the weather subsided.

The trek led them through swamp country, thick jungles, and over desert paramos. Yet they pushed on finding encouragement in the fact that they came upon several small gold laden towns which were successfully looted. It had all seemed so easy that it was with happy anticipation that they awaited

reinforcements a few miles outside Tumbes preparatory to falling upon the city and sacking it

A combat between the Spaniards and an Indian tribe the Punas from the Island of Puna in the Gulf of Guayaquil had also been a successful one from the Spaniards' point of view and the men became impatient to reach the treasure such a short distance away

Finally reinforcements came by sea in the form of a hundred men under the command of a captain Hernando de Soto. He brought with him a number of horses and at once this united party prepared to march upon the city

But disappointment—a very decided disappointment awaited them

Reaching the city, they swept forward half crazed with hysterical expectation. Then they halted

Tumbes—the greatest treasure city that Pizarro had visited was deserted

The Spaniards strained their ears for sounds of habitation and heard nothing. They surged forward and through the houses and temples. No part of the treasure was to be found in the city. No trace could be found of the men whom Pizarro had left there

Some of the inhabitants were found hiding outside the city. Captured, these people explained with conflicting statements how De Molina and his friends had met their death

Pizarro realized that word had passed ahead of him of the "excesses" of his party—that it would always be so unless he adopted more friendly tactics and sowed firmer seeds of good will among the Incas. So he issued orders that there were to be no reprisals for the loss of De Molina's party

But Pizarro was brutal by nature. It was not with honeyed words alone that he continued south and conquered the Incas

A fresh breeze was cooling the sunny deck. The ship rode comfortably across the Pacific swell as I rose more or less unobtrusively from my chair to avoid awakening the "siesta" enthusiasts around me

They must have been 'well away', for explosions from the clay pigeon shooting and sounds of hilarity and of reluctant

IN THE FORELANDS OF ECUADOR

BY

JOHN M. COOPER

ILLUSTRATED BY

JOHN M. COOPER

WITH A MAP

BY

JOHN M. COOPER

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

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CHAPTER IX

OUTSIDE the ship the early morning sky was entirely grey
It was almost dark, half misty, just short of being cold

Dark river banks were sliding past, dead and live trees clung
to dreary, muddy soil

The river itself was muddy, brown, dirty, threatening
It was easier to think of a flooded Niger, rather than a South
American sea river

Yet I hadn't seen the Niger so that I couldn't tell

Entirely ringing my head with the porthole, and almost
kneeling on Peter I looked up-river towards the bows, looked
in the direction of an invisible Guayaquil, at the limitless road
of discoloured water ahead

On the prowling sizeable brown rollers, which were patrol-
ling the chilled river, a cigar shaped wooden dug-out, grey and
dark, bobbed up and down just ahead of the *Santa Barbara*

As the port side of the ship ploughed past it fifty yards away
the two negro occupants sat still and silent

No gesticulation, no shouting, no carefree wave with which
the aquatic natives of other countries invariably greet a passing
steamer

I looked back at them as the dark dug-out encountered our
stem wash Still not a move—no sound, not a gesture

They weren't even paddling, just sitting, toned in with their
rough craft as if part of it I should say they looked depressed
But I could hardly see their expressions

Perhaps they had been out since the early hours, perhaps the
canoe was leaking They were undoubtedly cold

I had thought of African rivers—this dug-out successfully
fitted in—the two negroes completed the picture

When I strolled on deck after a comfortable American break-
fast I found the world outside had been cheered by a conquer-
ing sun Patches of azure showed through the grey above As

I watched, the river became brighter. The mist in the sky broke into definite clouds. The azure patches grew larger, wider, infinite—

"And all this leads to a Pacific hell hole," volunteered the man who didn't "fit in back home".

"Oh—I'd heard it was an interesting place."

"Yep, but a hell hole."

"Every disease under the sun, almost every plague known to man has paid a call."

"And at practically every other tropical port," I suggested.

"Yes—maybe that's so."

He pondered a little.

"Yet maybe not. This city has dealt some death-stinging punches."

"In common with other equatorial spots," I reminded him.

He remained silent, hit his lip, and subsequently walked away.

I regretted having argued, about a place that I hadn't visited, with a man who had obviously been there. Then my thoughts turned to pleasanter things than plagues.

Where was Tumbes, I wondered, the half Incan treasure city that Pizarro had discovered when he'd sailed along this coast? In the Gulf of Guayaquil, records had claimed. I consulted a map. Tumbes lay further to the south.

It was difficult to connect this dreary looking river with Incan treasure of emeralds and gold. Yet I could hardly dispute history, that is to say "alleged history" (if we are to cast the slightest suspicion on the many assertive records which set down the same facts).

But there was no doubt that this was the Guayaquil River—or that those members of the expedition who were aboard ship were to step ashore within an hour or so to an ex Kingdom of the gold familiar Incas.

And a little concentration on this fact alone enabled me to view the desolate-looking mudbanks, the forlorn looking upstream horizon, through eyes that came near to being dazzled by the possibility of what lay ahead.

On the day of our arrival I called at a bank to which a transfer had been made for me from London

As I was arranging my affairs a young Englishwoman beside me spoke through the cage to an English member of the staff—

"Doo't think I'll wait I'm off whilst the going's good "

Before I could turn to apologize for having kept her waiting she had disappeared. Then I stared at the doorway. The door was being closed. I looked towards the large windows. Their barricades were being put up. I listened. There seemed to be some shouting in the streets.

"Have you got a gun?" dramatically asked the young Englishman in the "cage"

It was a revolution. I'd been in Ecuador one hour

A London paper published the following account of it next day

"REBEL OUTBREAK IN ECUADOR

"QUITO, August 20th

A minor revolution appears to have broken out in Ecuador, where strong action has been taken by the President, Dr Velasco Ibarra, in placing under arrest leaders of Congress and Army commanders who are declared to be in opposition to him.

"Trouble began when the President issued a decree postponing the meeting of Congress, which under statute meets for a ninety-day session each year on August 10th until October 12th. Revolt among members of Congress, and early to-day the President took action by imprisoning a number of the Opposition leaders.

"Government House in Quito is at present surrounded by a ring of troops, said to be loyal to the President, whose action has caused a split in the military ranks. In Quito, apart from a small rebel section who are now confined to barracks, the men are loyal to the President, but in Guayaquil, where Opposition leaders hold sway, they have veered against the President."

Two days later yet another article appeared in the British press:

"ECUADOR QUIET"

NEW YORK, August 22nd

Don Antonio Pons, who had resigned the office of Prime Minister, has been chosen by the Army as President of the new Provisional Government of Ecuador. The former President, Don José Velasco Ibarra, was released from detention to-day and went to the Colombian Legation in Quito.

"It is reported that provincial garrisons are supporting Señor Pons. Colonel Andrade said yesterday that the country was quiet, and that the people had accepted the change of Government with surprising equanimity."

"The overthrow of President Ibarra is reported to be due to the Army's traditional support of the Constitution. When, as alleged, this was threatened by the President, the Army deserted him. The Acción Cívica, a semi-Fascist organisation, and the police were expected to aid President Ibarra. But when the Army declared for the Constitution, the police deserted the President, and he failed to win the support of the Acción Cívica."

All the Revolution that I saw was a parade that gathered loiterers as it went up one street and down another.

There was of course the shouting. There were the inevitable soldiers (mounted as far as I can remember in this case—on mules) with guns. A few of the marchers had small arsenals as well.

I was told that the Opposition was marching from the other end of the town—that inevitably they would clash.

Later I could see in the distance a fair percentage of the population gathering around the Customs house. I knew that Mont and Peter were there collecting baggage, but I omitted to subsequently demand their eye witness account of what had been going on. It is possible that it speeded their luggage examination, or conversely, the "officials" may have run out side to participate in the proceedings. The only obvious effect that the Revolution had on us was an enforced thirst. Every

bell hop, every saloon-keeper's assistant, rushed out to join in whatever was going on

Hearsay in Latin America suggests that the individual citizen near the thick of a revolution never eschews the opportunity to dispense with a personal *bête noire*. But it is also responsible for a lot of silly rumours, and although a sudden deficiency of mother in laws during such a political event would not confound me, these are more dangerous than true. So that it is hardly worth recording here the lurid activities that were said to take place during revolutions.

A young American whom I met in the U.S. Consulate invited me "around the corner" to see his small radio-gramophone shop which he said just paid his digs.

"Boy, and am I stuck in this country!"

Quite a crowd were around his enterprise when we reached it. News of the revolution in Quito was coming through.

Later, speaking with a member of another consulate I mentioned that I was surprised at being asked that day if I carried a gun.

Yes, it appeared, a lot, in fact most people, carried an automatic. But if you sat down to drink or to play cards after dark, with a South American, it was advisable to insist politely that both your gun, and that of your Latin friend, be handed to the temporary custody of the bar tender.

Many of his friends had become clients of the local undertaker as the result of their under-estimation of such a precaution.

"There's no getting away from it," he asserted, "tempers here are quicker than a flash."

And so had been my first impression of Guayaquil. How had I formed that fleeting opinion that the town held none of those things which, in my mind, constituted the real South America?

For now behind its front door I found a city steeped in every sort of romance, even "intrigue". Its music was in keeping with the heat of the days through which it lived. Very soon I located a bull fight. The colour, the mantillas, the theatrical scenes of my conception, were all to be found close at hand.

As if to convince me later in the evening a guitar laden cavalier put one foot upon the kerb and serenaded a balcony above

Human skins ranged in colour from negroid shades to a powdered white It seemed that the open air shops, with and without their electricity or 'flares' could only be run with the maximum amount of chatter

I have no idea of the hour that marked closing time It must have been a very late one.

With the coming of darkness music shops merely increased their volume of castanetted sound

The city awoke and seemed unreal, as had Panama

I have recollections of our passing through all this unreality to pay our respects to officialdom

I have visions of resplendent uniforms and much heel clicking

The atmosphere of the official building possessed a colourful flavouring of Ruritania

And despite the Revolution we were received with an almost extravagant courtesy

I can see myself climbing up a passport photographer's stairway to comply with further regulations I can also see myself emerging some time afterwards with something that I should have been delighted to bury

Lunch had been easy Friends from the *Santa Barbara* had helped us cope

But at dinner we were on our own

"Comido—I'll have *comido*," I said confidently, picking at random from the top of the menu

The *mozo* acknowledged my "choice" with a polite gesture. Then we both waited

"I think it's your move again," said a cautious Mont waiting to see what my words would produce

"Comido—thus—see—comido—COMIDO—" with an attempt to command the situation

The waiter inclined his head again

"Si—si—señor—claramente y que ?"

"M mm? 'Nother name for it," I hazarded to the others

I spoke again to the perplexed fellow awaiting a less confused order

"Yes—PLEASE—'claramentay'—?"

"Sí, sí, sí, señor, pero que . . . ?"

"Oh—o—oh, it's 'perroquet'—of course, the country's full of them—*en gracia*, I'll try something else—?"

"Parrot, huh?" said a member of the expedition. "Go on, have some, we want him to get around to us."

A helpful American at the next table leant over

"Say—'comido' means dinner, pick on anything else."

If the others had ever wanted to stab me in the back, they had that—

I forget what subsequently arrived. It makes little difference for I didn't consume it.

Whilst disembarking from the *Santa Barbara*, I had wondered if that tonth would howl for long. Now it was positively yelping—

This is very fine, I reflected. I envisioned myself canoeing after Indians with such a tooth.

"That's okay, I'll pull it," grinned a maliciously delighted Munt, with his mind on our limited surgical kit. "It's too late for a dentist now."

But it wasn't. He had forgotten that we were headlines.

"*Por agua*."

The small hotel boy painted through the half lit doorway. As each stair creaked with my weight, it seemed to grow darker.

I strode up two flights with an attitude of easy nonchalance, but with thoughts apprehensively dwelling on inquisition, sadism, and eventually found myself in the waiting room, typical of a fifth rate London film agent. There were no furnishings—just a form. The town's street lights filtered through a window.

I went to a door and knocked. It was opened and the benevolent professor like Ecuadorian appeared.

He spoke English.

Yes, it was quite all right—he had been warned that I was coming.

And so we were to penetrate the *Oriente* to study the Incas. He had a friend who had been there to catch butterflies—although he hadn't returned—yet—

I sat rigidly in the chair and watched him run his fingers through the tousled brown mass that was his head. I thought of Tolstoy.

It would not be long before I'd know the limits of his butchery. Recently I read of a European dictator who sits complacently with abstract thoughts and no anaesthetic whilst his gums are being tortured. I have a sneaking regard for such nerve—the same regard that I have for a person who can turn a live octopus inside out.

Incidentally dentists' drills and "octopi" are my two very special aversions. I once had an octopus clinging around my neck for ten minutes. I matured at once.

This shaggy but kindly individual advanced, instrument in hand.

Thoughts of the incredible tortures with which his ancestors had conquered the Incas. Thoughts of the present day presumable lust for blood in the local Plaza del Toros, thoughts of bartenders minding guns—

"Open, please."

It was the most comfortable performance. Perhaps it was his subtle anaesthetic wit and unlimited fund of anecdotes. He was an intelligent fellow, apt to become profound as he hovered over my distressed tusk. I found that my brain creaked as I reached out for the involved philosophies which he flaunted in my face, and found solace for my molat in the fact that none of them accommodated fatalism—

Small negroes offered a shoe-shine as I walked back through the cobbled streets. I could smell the 'freshness' of the "Front" ahead of me and because I always appreciate my full quota of ozone I was glad to get there quickly.

Other negroes appeared with lottery tickets—

"Treinta mil sures . . . !"

For quite a time I saw Guayaquil only through strings of shoe laces held in front of my nose, whilst trays of ice-cream and

green and red cordials were pushed forward as well I was obviously a "tenderfoot" gringo and every vendor on hand seemed to be trying the "long shot" of a sale To discourage them I achieved a "*vayase*" which I'd learnt soon after landing At this they would draw back a little and lag behind dogging my footsteps with unintelligible observations and obvious glee I knew then what must pervade the mind of a cub-master leading a church parade

There were exultant yells as I emerged from a hat shop with a new Panama, after my denials that I possessed any *antavos* The parade lasted as far as the botel where it had reached dimensions undoubtedly mistaken as political

During the evening, over a luke warm Pilsener, I was offered confirmation of what I had already been told Namely that the area of Ecuador is "disputed" This is because the vast frontier east of the Andes, in the drainage basin of the Upper Amazon, is all unsurveyed and much of it unexplored Claims by Ecuador, Peru, Colombia and Brazil conflict But I gathered that the most acceptable estimate seems to be 118,500 square miles, yet the extreme official Ecuadorian claim is nearly 276,000 square miles

There were other facts which were of interest, if not surprising The population figure was indefinitely set between "one-and a half and two-and-a half millions" Two hundred thousand of these were said to be of pure European blood There were sixteen thousand more people in Guayaquil than in Quito the capital

Despite the fact that I was in Ecuador, there were many geographical features of which I knew nothing I had not yet seen a good map of the country, but I learnt the following plain facts about it—

The Pacific Coast of Ecuador extends from about a hundred miles north of the Equator to four hundred miles south of it Colombia bounds it on the north and Peru on the south These three countries claim a great deal of territory "to the east", so that this boundary is uncertain

Two cordillera of the Andes cross Ecuador, with at least a dozen peaks above sixteen thousand feet in height.

Chumborazo, at over twenty-one thousand, is the highest Mining has only been slightly developed, though the country is known to be rich in minerals Thinking of all the glittering Incan lore that my mind had "sponged up" on board the *Santa Barbara*, I hoped that we would do something, stumble upon something, which might remedy this situation in part

And most of the country to the east was said to be "virgin forest", with a great deal of rubber near the disputed boundary. Besides the smart looking Panama hats (such as my purchase of earlier in the day) cacao, ivory nuts, coffee, other head gear, hides and rubber, from cultivated estates, are the chief exports Ecuador was alleged to import textiles, foodstuffs, machinery and clothing. It was supposed to have once produced half the world's supply of cacao, the seed that gives cocoa and chocolate, but a disease known as the "witch broom" had cut production to a third of what it was in its hey-day Petroleum and gold was exported from the country as well, and "both may one day be the medium to its undoubted future."

And of Guayaquil I received confirmation concerning those disgusted mutterings of my fellow passenger coming up the river The port had been a hotbed of yellow fever A scientific fight had been waged after the Rockefeller Foundation's survey in 1916 and in May, 1920, the Director General of Public Health, announced that the disease had been "stayed" I was glad to hear this, though I afterwards met people who claimed that there were still occasional cases But none came to my notice, whilst I was in Ecuador

CHAPTER X

"OKAY—about eight thirty "

He may have exaggerated when he called it the "greatest" private collection in the world. It is probable. I don't know, for it was the only one that I have seen embracing every side of Incan life. But *what* a collection!

He had glanced about the hall cafe of the hotel as he told us of its existence 'not a great many miles out of the city'. He had been most secretive as to the name of the collector or what it was Incan that he collected.

The only possible answer to this would have been 'Everything'

It was with the right air of mystery that we stepped from the shadows into the dark interior of his American sedan. Three minutes after it swung around corners of gloomy cobbled back streets and drove—"out of the city"

We were expected. We were welcomed in an atmosphere of secrecy. We were fed with creamy chocolate cake and Pilsener. We were 'observed', and then led to the collection.

White throne like stone chairs on a small cement back veranda introduced us to the room of curios beyond. And I repeat—what a collection!

The earthenware vessels that we had expected. The extraordinary wood-carved figures and their extended arms. The unexpectedly coloured pieces of Inca clothing. The golden ornaments that put us in an exceptionally good humour and confirmed our frequent yet hesitant assertions on the subject of Inca 'treasure'.

In lemon yellow gold there were ear rings, bangles, finger rings, necklaces, armlets, fish hooks.

There may have been a few golden nails amongst this dazzling assortment—I don't recollect them—yet it is known that the Incas used them in their doors and regarded the metal as commonplace

What does the ordinary man do when confronted with a collection like this?

In a famous museum he might take it for granted. In the home of a private individual who intimates cautiously that he has picked and dug up *every ornament and souvenir* himself from sites of old Incas treasure cities, it is little short of exciting.

We found it so.

There was every possibility that we might unearth such treasures ourselves—

The main purpose of the expedition was to trace or contact the Auka tribe of "will-o' the-wisp butchers", as one press 'scare-monger' had put it exultantly. Yet we had arrived sufficiently well equipped to tackle the treasure like (or so we considered) in case circumstances and our trans Andean trek took us within its easy radius.

To quote Eric's words as recorded by the American press "Though our expedition is purely scientific in purpose, we will, of course, not pass by the lake tradition has made one of the treasure store-houses of the world, without attempting to prove or disprove this long believed legend."

So that, try as we might to direct our concentration towards the serious aim of the expedition, it was difficult to avoid envisioning heroic treks through mountain blizzards with our special equipment and a glittering return. Often we would discuss such plans in an affectedly disinterested manner but, it seemed, in no time at all, our runaway ideas were bordering on the fantastic.

And so when driving back to the hotel, we were silent and very impressed with what had been seen and heard.

When I haven't had my breakfast those things that directly concern me assume strange proportions. I still hadn't 'broken' what seemed to have been a very long 'fast' when the room boy, preparing to wheel my trunks into the hall, swore that I had.

Early breakfast ordered without specification—"Desayuno temprano, a las seis, para El Señor," is liable to consist of a limited number of rolls, and some coffee.

Fortunately the hotel, being the right sort that prepared for the emergency of a coarse appetite, was able to cater to my hungry whums. And I was still able to catch the "train boat"

No—not the boat train—"train boat" Or train ferry

It would be inaccurate to assert that this staunch old vessel was a spring chicken. Those appeals from wood in agony may have come from the loosely, piled wharf, or they may not—

"Though 'river worthy,'" the ferry remarked dismally, "my pension is over-due "

It was with a resigned bearing that she withstood the scrambling over her wooden deck rails and suffered the casual dumping of tons of American provisions and luggage, with Indian children running more or less amok. But I hope they withhold that pension just as long as the wheels inside turn round. There is wad of South American atmosphere pervading those decks, and the "journey across" has more colour to it than could ever be blended with a Manhattan ferry

The old boat must have groaned as she saw us approaching with our overloaded barrow of equipment. We marched to the "station" wharf behind it, spread out across the road

"Hullo—you away?"

"Yes—are you?"

"M hm—catching Pan American flying ship this morning—good luck!"

"Thanks. Say bullo for us to New York."

"Sure—in three days."

Our 'smoother-of many hotel menu-difficulties' left us and walked on along the front towards the Grace Line offices

Pan American and the Grace Line are allied

Timber creaked and heaved as we moved away into that muddy, vine strewn River Guaya. Away from Guayaquil, directly away, towards Duran on the other side—

The few Americans going up-country, moved from the 'circus' in the innards of this ark and grouped with us towards the stern of the starboard deck, some staring without seeing over the wide wooden deck rail, some leaning, backwards against this rail, propping themselves lazily with their elbows

Most of us had met in some Guayaquil pavement café, or at some consulate, hotel restaurant—or elsewhere

Yet seemingly our talk had been small for we now discussed with a certain assumed earnestness the individual reasons that accounted for finding ourselves on this deck. We looked ahead. We explained why we were in Ecuador. We exchanged personal histories. We listened.

"Covered all this country, all the West Coast," volunteered the agent of a Californian film company, "weighing" a sub-standard size ciné-camera up and down in his hand.

I thought he had meant that he filmed likely backgrounds for his company with this camera. It appeared not. He rented films to the interior of Ecuador, and other Andean countries.

What cinemas would they have? How wild is it "up-country"?—I wondered.

I looked at the tangled embankments of this wide river, and again at the creepers, floating lana, and branches that were coming from "up there." So beyond all this there were movies—

Then "Of course, in *Quito*?"

"Not *only* in the capital," had been the reply.

There was the rancher returning just a few stations up the line, then "all of sixty five miles by hoss."

"Small, but I'm putting some by. Then maybe Pennsylvania—see my daughter—"

"Then what?"

"Well now, I just don't know. Maybe I'll drift back this way—"

"Oriente? Uh huh, they say it's a bad place. How do you mean "contact the Aukas", got machine-guns? No? Fella from this line retired away in there. Won't come out. Couple of others have gone in, heard tell they're living native. Woman botanist went in there few years ago. She came out. Course I don't know how far she went in—"

"What do I trade? Oh, I just trade, buy, string sandals mostly, send them to America."

"Sounds all right. Do you make a profit?"

"Sometimes not. Depends what I can find in the country that they might like back home."

"Like it here?"

"Not much, no I don't—"

"Jobs scarce in your part of America?"

"For some"

"If you don't like it, why?"

"Pop likes the idea—he prefers a gap between us—"

Which reminded me that *Australia* used to be, and probably still is, the dumping ground of black British sheep (possibly the indirect reason for that familiar Australian factory placard, "NO ENGLISHMAN NEED APPLY")

Telepathy or coincidence, for the conversationalist in the group brightened with

"There's an Australian gone *Oriente* as well, name of Kangaroo Brown Knew him some fifteen years ago Been in some time"

And gradually we understood that a number of people had not only penetrated, but were living in this *Oriente* which we had come to explore

"But Quito gets news of bad killings there"

So there was foundation for those American press reports

Soldiers in light well washed khaki ("Those rifles? Czechoslovakian," suggested an American), pancake hatted priests in black and miscellaneous sight seeing natives, completed the odd assortment of humanity which piled in and out of the waiting train

An advance booking had secured us Observation Car seats This "Car" was a short carriage with swivel lounge chairs and it was, of course, coupled to the rear of the train At the "tail" of this carriage was a small partly raised platform with space for a couple of fatalists to cling tightly There were no Ecuadorians in the 'Car' on this particular trip, and the complement was entirely non Latin

"Periodicos—*El Telegrafo*—*El Dia*—*El Universo*—"

These were national newspapers which we bought in an attempt to keep our finger on WORLD AFFAIRS, but our pooled Spanish vocabulary enabled us only to recognize a word here and there So they were folded again and we sat in these revolving chairs and waited for the train to move, meanwhile

squirming to the respective positions calculated as most comfortable for the trip

But—despite the drawn out exhalations of the husky little engine and the wisps of steam that spread the length of the train—nothing happened. So that we stepped out again and moved between the groups of squatting Indians, sellers of rings, and baskets which successfully tripped people like ourselves.

It seemed that this snorting little steel bull-dog which was to take us "up there" was waiting until the carriages were looking the other way. Then, by the expression on its face, it would make a sudden getaway, with the rest of the train awakening to the fact too late.

This was very nearly the case. The jerk was sufficiently severe to sever any normal coupling. But in a moment we were swiftly drawn away from the last hovel and gathering speed the train swept up the line through the greenest and most tropical looking fields.

With each collection of sheds marking another "station" the same vendors appeared with their sliced pineapples, their poured out drinks, their oranges, roasted bananas, ringed bread, their white toffee, and—what appeared to be suspiciously like an over size in roasted rats.

We sampled some of the 'doughnut shaped' fried bread. It had a sweet taste and was attractively, though unintentionally, decorated with finger prints, hairs and minute specimens of the country's geological strata. Bamboo clumps, cattle, a clearing with perhaps four banana trees and a similar number growing *papaya*, and other clearings cultivated with both these fruits for as far as the eye could see, swept by the 'observation' windows, to be substituted again by matted walls of jungle.

We stared at this wild looking foliage. None of us commented upon it but we realized that the job ahead was not to be as surmountable as we had confidently considered in the easy comfort of that New York hotel. None of us had taken the "green hell" articles very seriously, yet to the very edge of the railway line grew "impeneable wilderness" appearing

to correspond exactly with the vivid "write ups" in the American "columns"

It differed from the jungles of Celebes, Java, Sumatra, and Malaya, in fact the forest countries of the Dutch East Indies, with which I was slightly familiar. Here were tropical growths ten times as coarse. Never had I expected anything like this

Sometimes the Observation Car would swing from the tangled green lianas and giant weeds to a field of long grass, crisp, warm and moist. These fields were so luxuriant that I found no reason for the scragginess of the mules and donkeys which were being ridden through them. Yet there were exceptions. I saw some very fine animals.

Every sturdy puff of the little "monster" hauling the carriages after it suggested power and we sped upwards through the forest country until we reached Bucay, after several halts amongst the wooden shacks which constituted another station. Here again was the same bawling, the same pleasant chatter of 'Spanish' voices, the same cries from the women with baskets—cries which, though Greek to me, were by now quite familiar.

Things were happening at the head of the train. There would be more jerks—a run back of a yard or two. Similarly we would run forwards, then stop. I looked along the train. Two engines? Why?

As I have said, we had reached Bucay. We were preparing for big things—to *really* climb—

"In—jump to it—we're away—"

Supposing somebody was to slink up behind you in the calm that overhangs Kensington Gardens on a Sunday and loop the leg of your "park seat" to a team of lashed horses. An extreme simile? But the 'effect' of such an event would closely parallel the surprising manner in which we were again jerked on our way up the Andes.

Up, up—we were speeding and climbing the foliated face of the cañon. A silver river wound below and thick jungle still grew close to the rails. Yet not quite as green as before. The sensuous warmth—the tropical lethargy which had enveloped the 'Car' was noticeably giving way to a chillier atmosphere.

The comfortable stupor left us and we began to rub the backs of our hands.

'Ycp—close it—the air is biting my spine——'

Up, up, cactus, shrubbed ravines The jungle was again here, but less tangled

"Cool!—why it certainly is——"

We reached Huigra

"Yes, but we haven't begun to climb yet——"

We knowingly regarded this American with stupid smiles But not for long It was not a long way to the 'Devil's Nose'. It waited for us

"You-sah, we go thataway—right up there," slanged a yawning traveller

Through our eyebrows we took in the line zig zagging away up the precipitous face of rock above

"But for an American named Harman you would have had to get out here——"

'Harman? What——?"

"Harman thought it all out—went to work with imported negroes"

"Was there anything special about the job?"

"I should say Take another peck"

We "pecked"

The lines running up the precipitous mountain wall were vee shaped. The track seemed odd It was apparently without curves

"Like a series of broken rails "

'They are 'broken', yet, of course, connected"

A dead end in the valley which was almost all rock Behind the Observation Car a set of points were switched The train backed up one of the "Devil's Nose" tracks

We walked to the doorway at the rear of the train and stood on the small platform as it shunted up the line Another dead end, more points When the engine had passed them, they were switched as before and the train moved forward again, 'shuttle cocking' up another gradient across the face of the mountain

More settlements More shacks and mud buts It was decidedly cold At each halt passengers poured from the train Good business was done by the guardians of 'spitted' and roasted pigs At Alausi, "Botanical" Peter bought a lariat.

"La riata fuerte compran la riata . . ."

The Indians dressed now in coarser clothing Some wore llama skin 'chaps' on their legs Most of them had a stiff basin brimmed felt hat and a 'pancho' A pанcho is a blanket with a slit in the centre through which to poke the head Its four corners invariably hang to the knees of its owner who is usually not much over five feet Panchos are bought by the majority of people in Ecuador Later we wore them ourselves in the rain and chill of the Andes

On we slid, still climbing There were less cultivated patches and more sandy 'paramos' The chilled winds felt near freezing point, but I expect that the quick contrast between the warm jungles below and the bare wastes of the Andes made it seem colder than it really was When we reached Palmira Pass—the "top"—we had climbed over ten thousand feet

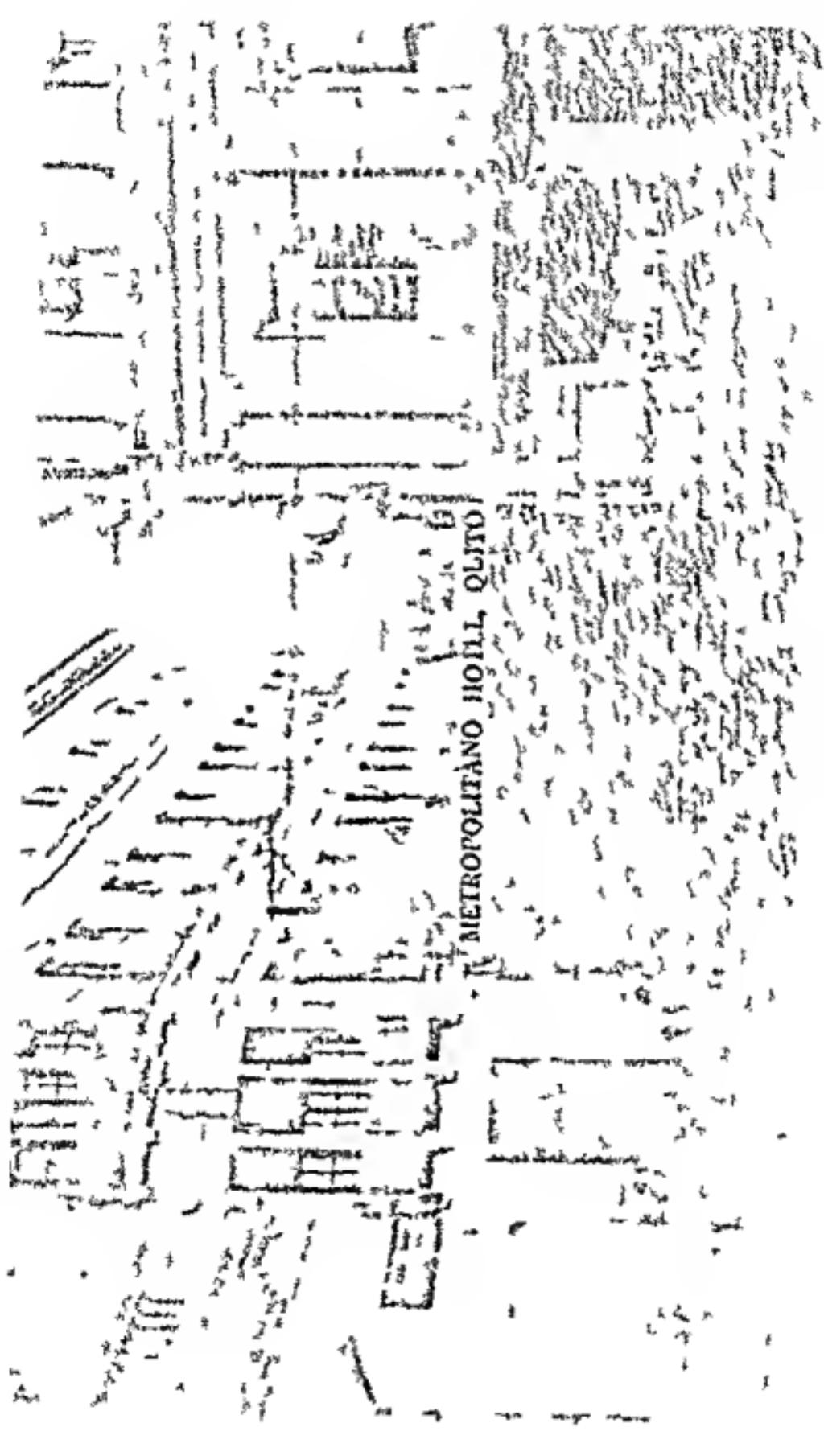
From there onwards were sandy wastes—an occasional 'hacienda' in the distance, an oasis in a wind swept desert of very few shrubs

We began to slowly descend From either side of us ranges of the Andes ran away into the distance Then we saw it—white and magnificent—rising from the hills ahead of us, to the clouds Chimborazo, the highest mountain in Ecuador, once successfully climbed by Whymper and a companion

As we drew closer to it, the sun sank lower, leaving the hills in shade and Chimborazo in dazzling brightness Then later as the sun really began to set and lights glowing up one by one over a wide area betrayed a township ahead of us, Chimborazo became a ball of red fire And now a final reflection from the sun tinged its western slopes a soft pink until finally the shadows closed upon it and its tremendous white form filtered only dimly through the dusk

The rails curved away from beneath it and in a wide sweep approached the dim, uncertain lights of the township We slid slowly, between houses, into Riobamba

METROPOLITANO NO. 1, QUITO





CHAPTER XI

DOES one merely "roll down to Riobamba"?

If *Riobamba* translated meant "pandemonium", I should say "Yes"—very definitely "Yes"—

It is a pandemonium of which the traveller is conscious when the first pair of bare legs obscure his window view of a raving, chattering assembly storming the carriages Indians on the sides, Indians on roofs—how it was that I never saw a peon squished by several hundred tons of train still confounds me when I dwell upon the subject. In contrast to the railway terminus at Riobamba, the Bastille has a placid history.

And what would be your reaction if six whooping Indians were to pounce upon your several miscellaneous possessions and depart with them, in six different directions, at speed?

Probably the same as my own which was to pursue the case carrying my razor and toothbrush, hoping for the best in regard to the remainder of the luggage.

My quarry, when I found him, was raiding another carriage, with my case under one arm. Seeing me, he skipped out with further plunder and, shrieking, leapt across the square. No further remnants of my baggage crossed my line of vision so I took up the chase.

The pursuit led to a dejected looking hotel. I read the name of it. It was not the "Metropolitano" where our residence had been guaranteed.

"Where—is—the—Metropolitano Hotel?"

"Este b&otil es muy bueno, señor."

"No thank you—anyway I don't know what you are talking about—where is the Metropolitano—Metropolitano—Hotel METROPOLITANO—"

"Venga no mas, señor—venga por aquí—los cuartos en este b&otil son linda—el comido es bien—"

"I said Metropolitano—where is it—donde Metropolitano?"

In time I actually arrived there having led my boarding-house tout half the way by one car. After that he led me The Metropolitano I found at the top of the square beside the station

The others had already arrived. I could only assume, in the words of a distressed American traveller (who had enjoyed similar athletics around the town) that "everything happens to me "

I was better off than this tourist—all my luggage had mysteriously arrived at the hotel.

It was chilly outside. After the warmth of the Coast, we thought it icy. The small stove heating the hall-way of the Metropolitano was a good sight.

Walking over to it we managed to perform the contortion of "thawing out" our feet and at the same time waving off-handedly at various uncharted areas on the map of Ecuador behind the bench, against which we leant.

It was then that we met Hank. Of course Hank wasn't his real name, but it will suffice

Hank had been notified that we were coming. He had been asked to give us a hand—to make the hotel bookings—

I should say that Hank had seen seventy Xmas—yet he was as agile as a grasshopper, with a languid yet vital tongue.

"Al doesn't appreciate Hank," remarked 'Botanical' Peter the next day when we had listened to a great deal of it.

"One of the real old-timers—Arizona veteran—hell-fire," continued our Peter, with a pitying glance in my direction

I have seen a lot of "Westerns"—my appetite for them having arisen from my ownership of horses in Australia and time spent around "stations" in that country. And in most of the "Westerns" that I can ever remember having seen, there has been a character just like Hank—"hell-fire"—tobacco chewing—eight notches—a man who held the spittoon distance record—

So that Hank although grand company, seemed to me to be a very familiar type. Yet apparently the Hanks of the screen are not as rare as the real thing. For 'Botanical' Peter goggled wide-eyed and occasionally indulged in what he must have considered the appropriate "Western" gesture of sliding his

cartridge-laden "Sam Browne" (we were still in Riobamba) several times about his middle—at the same time making spectacular adjustment to his newly-acquired sub-armpit bolster

Peter had wasted no time in climbing into his hob nailed knee-boots

"This—is a tough town," he had observed, gazing around, intently, for adventure

I doubt whether he held to this opinion for very long. To even the most adventurous, Riobamba can be no more than what it is—in short, a placid, almost deserted little cobbled town of the Andes, except for three days in the week when the trains arrive from Guayaquil and Quito, to transform the strange silence of its station and hotel square, into a bedlam

When Hank was not describing his participation in the wars of Cuba or displaying his private arsenal, he was bringing to us the interests of Riobamba

The sack factory, where we watched shuttles with very open mouths—the shoe factory where Peter ordered another cartridge belt—the site of old Inca ruins, where picking at chips of clay pottery we decided that we were about to shake the museums of the world—

We enjoyed the pleasure of "tea"—frequent teas—with a very pleasant American couple, on their estate in the shade of imported eucalyptus trees. Peter having turned lepidopterist on the Isthmus of Panama, speedily wove large scale plans concerning cyanide jars, when tray upon tray of impaled *Oriente* butterflies were brought to him. The rest of us goggled at fish-shaped Inca oil lamps (remember the "fish god" of Tumbes?)—at Inca water vessels of other shapes—at every indication that we now trod in the land of that ancient civilization.

We tasted creamy cheese in the buttery—we rode a borse and a Galapagos turtle—we outstayed our welcome

"Colour" is the one word which really describes the regular Sunday market in Riobamba. At this market best *parchos* are worn by the peons—new "Panama" hats are balanced on top of old.

Business is transacted over blocks of frosted ice brought in relays from the snowline of Chumborazo.

Live-stock causes a great deal of animated barter—it is not an uncommon sight to see a sheep, goat or rooster, as the victim of a tug-of-war between two peons.

It seemed to me that the women carried out most transactions—the men being never very far from a *chicha* stall where they would squat—drink—pass out—revive, and drink again—

Then would come a gap until the wives acquired more “*centavos*”. And in this way they (the descendants of one of the greatest civilizations of the world) spent their Sundays

Chicha can be either a food or a drink. In this case it was a drink brewed from corn. However, more about *chicha* later on

Callousness is the middle name of the Ecuadorian peon. Animals are dragged to market with as little idea of the humane in the mind of their owner as it is possible to conceive

Why not drag them along the streets on their back, he argues. Why bother to *lead* any animal along, if it is bound to plant its feet between cobbles and offer resistance?

A bit simple, these *gringos*, the peon tells himself. And you become the object of his insensate pity

The women appeared to be the worst offenders and it was in Riobamba that I have been closest to handing a female the “K O” as self-appointed representative of the R S P C.A.

A frothing bog slung across the razor back bone of a *burro* half its size. A lamb being hauled along by a rope attached to one foreleg which had subsequently broken. Clumps of fowls being jerked about and swung on the end of a string, their heads hitting the ground with every motion of their owner.

One could not become hardened to these things as one could to, for instance, the gorness of bull fights. The cruelty was unbelievable. Surely these peons must have some feeling, I would argue.

“How can they—they are animals themselves”

This appeared to be the truth.

Several times in my life I have played cricket with a team against lunatics. The reason being that the model asylum, of that part of the world where such eccentricities took place, had the best “oval” of the town, and the “loony” had a good team. That it has had lasting effect on me, will, no doubt, be exultantly claimed by friends who read this. Yet only in that

asylum have I ever seen such insensitive inanity as is found on the faces of the peons of Riobamba

These people are the beasts of burden. Ask any Ecuadorian whether he would rather have a donkey or a peon to carry his load. Invariably he will choose the peon as being the "animal" most capable.

The American couple, who had produced for us Inca pottery and an amazing collection of butterflies, invited me to "see more of Ecuador" from their "model T". I at once accepted.

"Stands up to it well," I remarked as the car jumped from one small boulder to another on a barely discernible mountain road.

"This? Smooth open highway compared with what is to come—"

It was an accurate forecast.

Yet how does this car—any car—get away with it, I wondered, as we drove westward still further from Riobamba.

If having to scrape a rock wall to avoid a burbling "Heath-Robinson" contraption packed with Indians, is not adventure—if risking a two thousand feet dive to avoid head-on collision with a similar wheeled community is not disconcerting—if being confronted with the appearance of a herd of sheep and three loaded llamas whilst sweeping around a narrow unbordered track high above ravines is not exciting—then our journey to and over the chilly twelve thousand feet pass was uneventful.

On old American chassis, in the Andes, can be found surely the crudest form of wooden passenger-carrying "cages" seen anywhere. Crammed with humanity—poultry—and perhaps papaiyas, these extraordinary vehicles are set in motion by wild-eyed looking Indians. With hysterical recklessness they cling uncertainly to the steering-wheel—plunge precariously along precipices—pull at loosely wired throttles or tug a sticking clutch back into place. Usually they don't attempt to brake, leaving what little they have of this control for the more adventurous incidents. Most horrifying of all, they are in the habit of changing to neutral and "switching off" when about to charge down a decline. This, of course, is to save

petrol. Did most of these 'infernal-machines' possess brake linings? From their down hill speeds I was sure they did not.

The subsequent screeching clatter of "tortured" gear-boxes was to me little short of sacrilegious.

On the "Pass" the "Model T" groped its way through cloud—our bones ached with cold—and we wished for over-coats that were elsewhere. Llamas, past whom we chugged, in the charge of *cholo* drivers themselves furred in llama skin, gazed at us in their warmth, and mouthed reflectively.

The car descended again to the comfort of sun-heated valleys. Whitened mud houses, the inhabitants of which appeared to spend their time inspecting each other's heads, cluttered the hillsides. Small farmed gulleys, from which the Ford would climb again to show us Chimborazo's shining peak, repeatedly "switch backed" the "roadway", as well as cultivated valleys which could have fitted easily into many countries of the Old World.

On we would bump, over rocky tracks, over rock-strewn roads of soft dust.

Already I have intimated the narrowness of some of these roads—some—for others were wide cuts through a dark silt-like sand, bordered by thin high trees—cactus—and prickly pear.

Finally we reached Guaranda.

Here again was the usual big square—two sides of which had been converted into a minor market.

"*Saspadilla . . . mula carambal . . . dulce . . . saspadilla . . . belada . . . chucha . . . compran dulce . . .*"

These words, despite the florid exclamations of the *cholo* upbraiding his mule, for the most part fell pleasantly on the ear.

The vivid coloured cloths on the stalls suggested props of an "extravaganza show" and in Piccadilly would certainly have held up traffic.

But in Guaranda—as I found it to be in all Ecuadorian towns which I visited—these stimulating flashes of rich purples—reds—greens—"toned up" and "glamourized" an atmosphere which on "non-market" days must lean towards drabness.

Every day in such towns or near them, Indians and *cholos* (half breeds) can be seen jogging through dusty roads in faded *panchos* which originally bore such high colours

But in the rains of the Andes, in the frequently damp all-night treks to and from market, and in the dust of the highways in which their *chubas* sodden owners choose to reel, the richly-toned dyes fade and quickly wear away

Yet even the faded cloths and *panchos* greatly stimulate the beauty of the already amazing spectacle that is Ecuador

I loitered to buy some "bandanas" Even further purchases caused no comment. I might have been one of the hundreds of Indians filing in and out of the market in their rimmed hasin hats

"*Helado dulce* *senga* *senga* "

Everywhere a "honeyed" Spanish—none of the noisy chatter so evident on the Riobamba railway square.

Guaranda was a quiet, sleepy town

Its market was conducted in almost the same serene orderly manner, as the business done across the rural counters of the few general supply bucket shops, which we visited

In these stores had we chosen we could have bought torches—cloth—pick-axes—chocolates—German beer—cartridges—wire netting—

My hostess contented herself with a pound of white toffee, sold in inch thick chunks Despite the fact that we had exhaustively priced each article of the entire stock, not even the Ecuadorian who, with urbane seriousness, dropped finger fulls of the "candy" on to the scales, seemed to sense the oddity of the purchase

Trundling downhill from the main street of Guaranda, the Ford headed east back towards Chumborazo—back towards the Riobamba from which we had been separated by many a small mountain gorge

Though it takes very little to tempt my bile away from its routine stamping ground, I joined in the munching of the sugared purchase, at the same time inhaling the mountain air that rippled in under the roof of the tourer It was very invigorating and after the sleepy torpor of Guaranda our heads felt clear Yet we passed poor devils less fortunate lying along the roads with their wives standing over them *Chubas!*

Once again we crossed the icy pass on the *paramo* of that high range separating Guaranda from Riobamba and subsequently approached Chumborazo, as the setting sun tinted its cloud topped western slopes that familiar deep pink

Then the clouds lifted.

"Twenty-one thousand feet of sheer beauty," commented my American hostess

One week after our arrival in Riobamba, as the afternoon brilliance of the sun again softened Chumborazo's slopes, the town began to liven up

To-day this tri weekly animation had a difference Eric was arriving with the four other members of the party So that from our point of view this meant that "things" actually *were* about to begin

The usual show

Running feet—very occasional laughter—cries from peon salesmen—encouragement to unco-operative llamas (there for no very apparent reason, although probably to be 'loaded' from the train)—irresponsible taxi-drivers clattering around the corner on half a wheel—their raucous touts—peons sitting on the rumps of dejected looking *burros* who pattered across, head to the ground with an air of unhappy resignation—the metallic slap of iron shod ponies—the soft "clap-clap" of those less fortunate

All these things shook the sleepy cobbled square—whilst conversation, shouts and vendors' cries in Spanish, around the half-open terminus beyond, intimated that at any moment the Guayaquil Quito train

It drew in with the usual free riders (who congregate for the purpose three hundred yards up the line) clinging to the carriage sides—the roofs—the platforms—

"Hullo, Sonny—hullo, George"

"Alasdair? I'm Carl"

"Lo, John—cat's whisker all set?"

"Eric? Tinkering with luggage"

"Hi, there, Mont—Peter—"

The Expedition—more or less *en masse*—

CHAPTER XII

PREVIOUS to the arrival of Eric's party from the coast, Mont, Peter and I had disconnectedly spent our "non sightseeing" moments filling liquid compasses, polishing leather, taking "without a tear" Spanish lessons from the manager of the hotel and oiling guns.

Pete and I had floundered frequently in a sea of nautical rhetoric from Mont, who had laden himself with a Mercator's Chart and some profound astronomical literature.

When the trains had deserted the town I sometimes wondered if there could be a more disconsolate place than Rumbamba. To kill time we made a habit of visiting "*Ej Pekuquero*" for the daily erasure of luscious growths or sat on beds calling the room boy, to test our newly-augmented pseudo-Spanish.

Peter, well under the power of the *Lepidoptera*, studied glass ash trays locally decorated with butterflies from the *Ortiz*. The seed had sown when he had solo'd into the Panamanian wilderness between Cristobal and Balboa and now membranous winged insects pervaded his nocturnal fantasies. To counteract this he read a book on sharks.

On the morning following Eric's arrival we rose with an unshakeable conviction that more concrete occupations were about to supplant our sciolisms of the past week.

But not every part of a jungle expedition can be arranged in a New York Hotel. Reorganization, when you "arrive on the spot", is inevitable. It was possible that well-intentioned helpers, whose rural experiences had probably been limited to morning walks in Central Park, had cheerfully thrown in expedition soap and toothpaste with the rubber boat. The dehydrated vegetables might have been hammered down with the film cameras. We didn't know.

Everything possible had been done in New York to avoid

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a contingency such as this Yet it was inevitable that the boxes should be opened sooner or later and repacked

And there was another obstacle to progress

Practically every member of the expedition, with the exception of Eric, began to display chameleon tendencies and a reluctance to get out of bed

For a week this kept up My interior mutinied with the stomachs of the rest of the party when a little Macleans might have put us on our feet Despite the fact that the hallucinations accompanying this particular illness conjured disturbing visions of Indian carpenters hammering long boxes and Eric telegraphing next of kin, nothing very much happened except that we changed colour For it was only biliousness

South American food is most palatable, but somehow different to our own One afternoon, during this period which we called Black Week, when the intestines of four of the party were being initiated, John the Radio-operator came into the patio with his ash-coloured hair on end, remarking that his room harboured something that resembled a ghost But John's hair was always on end It grew that way

Yet we decided to investigate his claim George of the "supply department", by profession an aeronaut-cum-New-York restaurant manager, looked very yellow as he blinked dismay over the sheet of bed number two in "Sparks" quarters

Later John advised us to look again and see something "that couldn't happen twice" It was still George in bed, but this time the distressed face that stared at us was green

"Boy, how those Georges do change," chaffed someone

"Push his head through your red sweater and I'll get my colour film," from another

George forced a martyred smile and looked as if he badly needed a padre I am afraid that a general guffawing represented the extent of our sympathy

We resumed our packing Half, in fact most, of the bedrooms at the Metropolitano are built around the stone patio, which is open and unroofed Spread about every part of it were our cases well sciongnumed with the mark of the expedition

Some of the "presents for the Indians" laid out beside the

boxes must have included several thousand articles from Woolworth's stock. Many of them were later of such value to us that we used them ourselves.

Scissors—reels of cotton, coloured to catch the native eye—mirrors—penknives—rainbow balls of twine—steel-cutlasses—and all those things for which an inhabitant of the Upper Amazon might offer his services were cased together and marked with special numbers.

Soon everything was relisted and again in shape. We now found that the Spanish dishes could be consumed without subsequent internal clatter. Life was very pleasant and the sun shone all day on the white slopes of Chimbocazo which towered above the town.

Arrangements had been made, through the courtesy of a wealthy Ecuadorian, that we should use his high powered radio station for the amplification of our own signals.

We drove to his estate one evening and conversed with the Expedition headquarters in New York. On one occasion when the "bottom dropped out of the ether", we were unable to establish two way contact with this same American station. An enthusiast in Connecticut chatted to us down his microphone offering to "skip around the corner to find a drug store with a 'phone'".

"He 'skipped'—found a 'phone—called our New York station and arranged for conversation on a different wavelength. For the rest of the time spent in Ecuador we were in constant touch with New York. Messages from our engine-generated transmitters subsequently found their way to this more powerful station in the Andes on a special day every week. They were either helped on their way or were recorded and rebroadcast to America.

Conversation with New York by radio was actually easier and more coherent than by landline from Riobamba to Quito. Much as I enjoyed my stay in Ecuador, I do not remember spending my happiest moments with any of its telephones. One could not just pick up the receiver, breathe Brown's local number into the mouthpiece and expect his voice all within a few minutes.

For instance, this little scene—

"Would you have a boy call Señor Brown, please."

Then anticipating the incident to follow you make yourself comfortable somewhere near the 'phone.

Br-r, b-r-r-r-r-r-r, br-r-r-r-r-r-r, br-r-r-r . . .

The bell "rings" with a dull muffled sound, like a midget-car protesting at being cranked

"Hollah . . . hollah . . ."

Br-r-r-r-r-r, br r-r-r-r, br-r-r-r-r . . .

"Holla-a-a-ah . . ."

This performance is repeated eight or nine times until your fingers drum slowly on the chair

"Holla-ah—bollah—hol—ah, Central? Central, *deme el trente quatro*—hollah—Central, *el trente quatro*— Señor Brown—Central—CENTRAL—HOLLA-A-AH, CENTRAL—"

Again the "Br r-r-r, Br-r-r-r-r . . ."

Once more a repetition of the whole performance. The result is invariably the same—

"No contesta, señor"

"Would you know a hairy tapir?"

The average Londoner approached by the above sentence, might be inclined to humour the speaker, excuse himself, and furtively flag an ambulance. But such a well-meaning gesture would probably be superfluous for the hairy tapir is an established fact. Could the reader, however, describe one off-hand?

It was our 'intention' to supply such a creature to the New York Zoo which held no living specimen. Yet how many of us could have identified the animal from an unlabelled zoological assortment? Riobamba's Museum of Natural History possessed one—stuffed—

So with two others, I walked a few hundred yards down the cobbled main street to a palatial-looking building, one wing of which housed the collection.

The mounted specimen which we were shown was a small one, actually no larger than a giant hog and not unlike one. Yet its long coat and general appearance in a way resembled that of a black bear and, if you can mentally conjure such an association, you have the hairy tapir. Of course any Natural

History book or encyclopaedia should tell you a great deal about the ordinary tapir, but his "hairy" cousin is rare, and is said to be only found above ten thousand feet. We ultimately encountered our first specimen at twelve thousand five hundred

The museum gave us more than an intimation of *Oriente* fauna. The various 'bush cats'—the jungle "lions", sleek puma like animals, and some of the monkeys, were new to me. But it was the exhibition case with the Upper Amazon fish which held our attention. It harboured some nasty looking specimens. There were the "*piranhas*" with their savage dog-teeth, it is said that they can "smell" blood from a scratch at a considerable distance—it is then "all up" with the owner of that scratch.

Here also were malicious "shovel rays", with electrically-charged cord like tails known to have killed children. There were electric eels—pugnacious looking frog faced mud fish—a *pescado* that resembled a bream and a general assortment of seemingly aggressive inhabitants of the *Oriente* rivers.

Then there were the birds. What a movie we should have if the prototypes of half this collection could be "shot" with our colour cameras. White condors, with formidable claws and a vice-like beak, spread six feet of wing across their particular stands! Swallows with tails a foot in length, rainbow parrots similar to the Australian "*rosella*", and macaws helped make up the complement of full deep reds, rich blues and yellows. And these against the tangled "green hell" background of the *Oriente*—

The show was very encouraging. I wanted to get away at once for already we had marked time for two weeks in the too placid atmosphere of Riobamba. But there was still work to be done and a species of cyclone enveloped the equipment in the hotel patio most of each day.

Riobamba's air of desolation is really a mask. Behind it campaigns are waged against Red propaganda to-the-Indians—industry hums in *bancadas* and *fabricas*, despite the South American attitude of "to-morrow"—and political enthusiasms run high.

Once or twice I had occasion to step from the deserted

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cobbled streets to the Army headquarters No "desolation" there, no *mañana*

Instead small groups in uniforms conversing earnestly together—heel-clicking and brisk steps from office to office—telephone bells—the tapping of a buzzer—altogether a furious efficiency tempo—

Yet Riobamba outwardly seemed dreary—depressing—

When the packing had been checked, it was decided that Sonny and I should go ahead and arrange a camp site at the *hacienda* mountain base, a hundred miles from Riobamba

How exultant we were to be the first away

When I met Sonny on a New York hotel roof, he had only just returned home from an "expedition to Thibet"

How, when, and where he had learnt about Eric's party, I have little idea, but he caught an express liner from China to California, an aeroplane across the United States and arrived in New York a day before I did

Sonny had discovered at Oxford that life held many accessible pleasures

His remark recommending the rear-seat, in over night trans-America skyliners, testified to this fact. "Well then I had known little about the air hostess

"Did you reach Thibet, Sonny?"

Sonny smiled. He had just concluded a vivid description of Shanghai night life. I felt that I knew just how far into the interior he had trekked

From precarious positions on duffle bags which had been balanced on equipment loaded higher than the driving cabin of the lorry, we watched Riobamba recede through white dust.

Then as the trunk rumbled towards the slope of Chimborazo

"Sonny—life could be more complicated than it is"

"Too cold"

Wisps of chilled mist were brushing the thundering vehicle. Sonny shivered—

"My coat?" he queried, "damn thing's in a bundle somewhere—"

"De-pancho the driver"

Sonny did and felt warmer

"After Eric's show, what do you intend to do?" I asked him.

"Another, I suppose."

"Where?"

"O-oh, Thibet or——"

"But you've just been."

"M m, yes——"

It began to drizzle. Then came hailstones

"Press that pedal, driver, you've a cargo of martyrs——"

"Fabren Sie sehn——no, wrong again—the Spanish quick——"

Sonny split the rain with a wad of French

"Spanish, Sonny, unleash your 'Easy Spanish'——"

The hail now pelted at us in sharp pigeon-egg chunks. If ever I had needed an Ecuadorian vocabulary it was now. There was to be no escape from the freezing bombardment and certainly no room for us in the cabin piled with packed instruments which already squashed the driver. There was no alternative but to lie full length along the bulky duffles, philosophizing, as our ribs threatened to frost, that most things have an end.

I fished for my "What you want to-say and how to-say it in Spanish", cloth edition, but it was elsewhere.

"Foot down, driver, r-pido—r-r-rapido—r-r-r-rapidamente——"

Again helpful Sonny broke into a hurricane of French. Yet how ignorant we were, with our minimum experience of road travel in that country. What need has there ever been to encourage an Ecuadorian driver to "step on it"? Sonny and I had been wasting our inarticulate un-Casillian breath when we had struggled for the Spanish equivalent of "open that throttle or else——".

Once across the "peak" of that sheet pelting mountain shoulder, our Laurel and Hardy predicament varied, and we plunged down chasm round perpendicular walls, and—as the uncertain equilibrium of our accommodation wavered—gazed glassy-eyed down ravine walls of infinite depth.

"Well it won't be long now—OW——"

"You're first, Sonny, unless you move this way."

"At this speed? Huh—if we ever get across it will be you hanging over the brink——"

The drizzle became warmer, it was almost comfortable. Fortunately no driven herds spread themselves across those cliff hewn roads and towards five in the evening, the lorry swept to the bottom of a valley and alongside a husky, galloping river. Force was the keynote of that rampant wall of water slashing at rocks and speeding heavily down the valley.

"It took the bridge," said the California-educated, gun-packing, check-shirted, ten gallon-hatted son of our Latin host. He indicated the broken ends of tough-looking beams fifty feet above the swirl.

Then he pointed over the water to an old American two-seater sedan, which he had driven down to a road-end, at the bottom of a cliff face.

"Just drove it over," he continued, "when the timbers gave. Part of the road—see, that piece—broke away in front of the Dodge. We just slid out of that old bus at a gallop and finally made it before the track on both sides of the car crumbled into the river."

"And were we feeling good? Into that water at floodtime and they finally pull you out, in the Atlantic."

"But the car—?"

"Tackle and ropes and we had it up that wall like a rock-spider—yep, it was a little heavy—"

A "little heavy".

The cliff face overhung the bounding river to a height of at least one hundred feet. Yet this off handed comment dismissed the matter easily, as if it were part of *hacienda* routine to haul automobiles up and down Andean cliffs.

The *hacienda*

Only in the distance had I seen one. It appeared that we were to be spared the necessity of locating a camp site that evening. We appreciated this for our clothes were still soaked.

"Then with no bridge, what now—?"

"Everything goes over the *taravita*—on those wires—so will we—a truck will be down soon to load on the other side—"

A small platform swung loosely from cables strung across the torrent.

"This heavy stuff on *that*—how often do those wheels unhook?"

"Oh, often——"

"Thanks, that's just fine——"

"Driver—turn the lorry—it's Riobamba——"

"Those cliffs and all that sleet again?"

Our South American friend pushed back his *sombrero*.

"Say, aren't you explorers?"

"There's a degree of uncertainty about that point."

"Don't you want to explore the other side?"

"Would we categorize ourselves as explorers Sonny?"

"That's the way I described myself in the hotel register."

"Okay—let's cross. Unload——"

But already half the equipment had been taken off the lorry and peons were hauling the swinging platform towards us

The aerial trip was subsequently made without incident.

Unbarricaded cliff roads invariably assume their worst aspect when somebody else is driving. The three thousand feet climb from the tumult of water marking the valley floor particularly coincided with this contention.

Rain had made the narrow track about as slippery as it could be. On several occasions all hands disembarked to manoeuvre this ancient automobile from some incredible broadside positions in the wet mud. The inky blackness of night, which had suddenly engulfed us, didn't help.

"Ever been over?"

"Yep—drove the truck off once—but not in a place like this——"

We concluded that "like *stir*" meant another of those perpendicular drops, with which Sonny and I now felt sensitively familiar.

But that darkness. With a storm still undecidedly hovering in the offing, not even a friendly star flashed its goodwill.

The lights were feebly struggling to prove themselves die-hards but the battery of the old coal-ignitioned car was ill. It tried hard. Sometimes we *mauld* see the road . . .

A light in the distance.

"Yep, fellers—that's it——"

The unmistakable sensation of cobble-stones beneath the wheels.

A gap between two discernible walls. Passing through it, the car stopped.

We stepped out into slush and an aroma—an aroma universally associated with grunting stock.

An odd snuffling sound from Sonny. He had elevated his nose and appeared to be sampling what ozone there was.

"Matter, Sonny—asthma?"

"Hogs," snorted that palated explorer of Thibet.

Some stone steps; a figure holding a lantern.

"Fellows, this is my dad. He speaks only Spanish."

Our host—*El Señor*—

CHAPTER XIII

IN a cemetery, a midnight lament from that conversational parrot might have curdled the gore of any healthy man. But this morning it was merely part of the new scene

And what a morning!

Eye-dazzling sun on the white walls of the patio. Sun sparkling as only sun can, on the not too distant snow cap. A brilliant "white" sky hanging over blue hills and aggressive valley inclines. And, as an introduction to all this brightness, midget sunbeam blumps cruised the big unpapered room from one open door to another.

Immediately outside one of them was an impression of an "English" garden and trees—

Through the other door beyond the wooden railings was a third patio veranda with its pigtailed Indian femininity, and again that parrot contributing to their chatter.

A monkey climbed his chain and precariously balanced, grimacing on the railings. His sole occupation apparently consisted of unexpected dives at the tail of a tantalizing cat. But cats have a few cards up their sleeves and a *man* can look particularly unwell when it's plans are reversed—

Dogs barked, one especially emitting a cough suggesting the comments of a weary performing lion. Soft hoofs pattered on the cobbles. A Spanish voice drawled a musical laugh from one part or another of the patio, whilst in my line of vision two images of Pochahontas fought to sabotage each others raven plait.

On a bed, not very far from my own, white sheets encased a carcase. There was not a stir from it. The owner was away in Shanghai—

I looped folded arms over my knees and with them *mainly* scraped my hirsute chin. It was not easy to start the machinery of Alasdair Loch into action, though perhaps it should have

been. I could not go on balancing in the middle of my bed with such encouraging atmosphere and proximate sound effects. Yet we were guests—

But bed certainly wasn't the place and I groped for my slippers with the anticipation of a pioneer.

That musical voice again and its pleasant laugh. Then—

“Perita—traega agua caliente para los señores—”

“Sí, señor mia”

The weightier of the ‘reddened’ young women dealt a parting slap to the other and was pursued around the wooden boards past my room.

I had only just begun to experiment with the thick china wash basin when bare feet thumped back again.

No self-consciousness about that hefty young lady. She scampered through the door to where I was plastering soap about my ears, her face drawn in protest.

“No, no,” she rebuked seizing my initated basin of cold suds and throwing it on to the garden, “tengo agua caliente para Usted”.

“Yes—well, perhaps I might afterwards but—oh, hot water oh, yes—fine—pour it in—”

Her expression, when she had completed her mission, plainly said. “Now you can wallow.”

There is a rather blemished international poem which for generations has dwelt in the unsated minds of corruptive adolescents. Fortunately, my memory takes me only to the first four lines. They run.

“Cats on the roof-tops
Cats on tiles
Cats with their faces
Wreathed in smiles . . .”

It was this literary effort of some erring bard which crossed my mind as I introduced my shaven smirk to the world of the *hacienda* patio.

Cats.

Cats fighting. Cats “not up yet”. Cats clawing lazily at the air and rolling in the dust. Cats walking veranda rails and

DRYING THE WHEAT AT THE HACIENDA OF EL SEÑOR





watching shadows flashing across the blinding glare above. Cats . . .

Well many, many cats . . .

No, I am not describing a Battersea catarium. The scene is still Ecuador—still a cobbled *hacienda* patio in the Andes—

Yes, there were cats everywhere and of every shape I counted thirty, though I may have included the same one twice.

Five dogs alternately pranced and lazed about the yard and on the veranda steps. Near the steps two cows stood patiently anchored to the railings.

A thickly skirted Indian woman in a snubbed Stetson, took empty glasses, then placed them warm and frothing on a tray held by a minute Spanish Indian girl, with plait. This little *abolo*'s name, it appeared, was Carmen.

Indian women in more "male" headgear and this ankle-length attire emptied wheat from sacks on to a tarpaulin, obviously to dry it in the sun.

A mule hitched near the gateway in the thick wall across the patio flicked its tail in early morning impatience, and a nearby single-shafted ox-cart rested on its yoke. Perched on a wheel of this ox-cart a chained monkey focussed a ray of concentrated jealousy across the wheat tarpaulin at the other one still warming cats.

Again I heard that pleasant languid drawl. Another *Felix* smooged through a doorway followed by a tall handsome woman, with dark hair and eyes.

Why, of course—yes obviously, this was our hostess the *Señora*.

And having introduced herself and inquired after the dormant Sonny, she smiled and queried "*Peró, no querés desayuno—?*"

I nodded—conjured my most sociable grimace and tried to converse. But only one or two straggling words of an Oriental language came to me, so I backed away and dragged out Sonny.

Between us we dissected the conversation of our hostess. My small "Collins" gave it—

Desayuno—breakfast—

To the smiling lady, entertained at our delayed interpretation

we exhibited little doubt that we indeed were ready. And no sooner had this breakfast arrived, than it had gone again, but to the right places.

As one of the expedition was subsequently to remark

"Mm hmm—bit of this Ecuadorian ultra violet—sausages, bacon, eggs and chips like those—raspadura syrup with these pancakes—wash 'em with a big cup of coffee"—he suited his actions to the remark—"then you've got something—yowsahl!"

He too had been dismayed in Guayaquil at the accepted breakfast of the country—coffee and rolls only—

La Señora perpetually wore an expression of amusement, and her eyes proved the existence of an eternal sense of humour. They seemed to gaze serenely above things about her, as if their owner communed constantly with a completely different world. Frequently she was overcome with the most affectionate drawled chuckle. A low and deep "Ha a a a-a, ha a a a-a—" in delicious Tallulah flavoured tones.

Late rising usually meant breakfast with our host. Not that he rose late. In fact I doubt whether he ever spent more than a couple of hours in bed. A more intensive worker than any of his men he was usually away before the crowing of any ambitious cockerel. Several hours later his mule would clatter between the white-washed mud walls of the patio and cross the cobbles to be hitched near the steps. And Sonny and I would sit there in the half open veranda breakfast room, partly awakened and partly stupefied by the goodness of his board, whilst our host, surrounded by cats, conversed with us in Spanish. To begin with these conversations were inclined to be one-sided. I could count to twenty in my own interpretation of Castilian. Sonny similarly tongue-tied would break into French.

Suggesting that *El Señor* was "surrounded by cats" would not quite convey the picture.

Have you ever had ants in your— Well, crawling all over you? You flick one off your knee, and another from your ear. Having dealt with quite a hungry ankle bite, your discoveries disclose more ants and even ants again. Right, then imagine yourself in the same situation with cats substituted for the ants.

You still wouldn't like it? *El Señor* positively enjoyed the ascent and nap of every cat. And they knew it.

Then how many cats were there? Between twenty-five and thirty. A cat on both shoulders—occasionally one on his head—any number that could find seating accommodation were on his lap as one by one he would pick them off and put them on the floor. But the cats with all the good humoured guile of family-servants refused to take him seriously and would parade the length of the table in readiness to secure a vacated part of his chair—

It was not at all uncommon to have your breakfast explored and rejected before sampling it yourself, or to suffer a furry tail in your nostril when trying to deal with your coffee.

But the breakfast table was not the cat-sanctuary that it appeared to be. The animals seemed to sense that there was a limit to what they could do. That is to say all except one. An extrovert. A cat with no imagination.

El Señor's breakfast table was rustically rustic—and towards either end a floating bowl with Andean blooms added that extra touch of colour—

The strange affinity of our host for his cats paled beside the interest shown by this special *Felix* in the bowl almost immediately opposite *El Señor*.

A few more unexerted sniffs—yet another circumnavigation of the bowl.

Whilst cats cuffed each other over a coveted knee this one refused such an unprofitable waste of a meal time period.

A stroll up the table then . . . that bowl again.

Like a sneak-thief planning next week's coup *Felix* kept on sniffing—circumnavigating—purring—

The deadline came one lunch hour when our host supervising in the fields nearby had seized one of those infrequent opportunities to reach his "board" instead of delving into a saddle-bag. And now at the table the aroma of the barley soup wafted across his receptive palate. It's hot urging a mule up valley slopes, and barley soup . . .

"Buuu—m-mm—muy bien—songo baastr—"

Lips smacked—*El Señor* liked it—more barley soup filled his empurpled plate.

"Ah, Mishu, *vayase* "

Not breakfast time No time for cats now One by one he picked them from his person almost angrily

Felix had studied the flower bowl for a week He paused—rolled round again—then stopped altogether

There was something definite about him His face shone with the appearance of a mind made up

No looking about him for the reactions of other cats No self-conscious "peek" to the left or right Felix merely drew alongside the bowl

Not a great deal in common with William Tell Very few would attempt to compare the eye of this cat with that of sharp-shooter Tom Mix Perhaps *E/Senor* had more in common with both these famous men It certainly seemed so

Felix's sights were obviously too far above the target Directly in line was not the bowl of Andean floating blooms—not the table—not, as you might expect, *E/Senor*—

But somehow our host's barley soup—

Did I mention that *E/Senor* packed two guns?

The *ebolos* picked Felix's warm body from the floor Barley soup and broken china splayed the patio where it had been thrown

There were no cats in sight

On most mornings as the sun floated through the azute towards its midday point, the patio would be spread with the tarpaulin and covered with more moist wheat Not just a sprinkling—hut bags of it—a small desert of the heavy steaming grain weighed heavily on the canvas And on top of it the Indian women made rhythmical movements with their bare feet, brushing back the dried parts and exposing wheat that had not seen the sun *La Senora* would frequently sit in the middle of this small desert, laughing and conversing languidly with the delighted raven haired girls

Such a relaxation was invariably a prelude to lunch and *La Senora* usually stepped to the wheat after a husky morning selling supplies to the Indians from her small veranda store She made no profit and usually gave over measure It saved the peons of the *hacienda* long all night trips to the nearest town They had little idea of money and in the manner of most tropical

races, were more inclined to mentally credit their purchases to a "floating debt" —

This "floating debt" and what is known as the '*padrone* system' go hand in hand, in Latin America and leave the way clear for unscrupulous exploitation of the native.

Although many of their masters, such as our host, give them what amounts to more than just an honest deal, there are others who allow the simple Indians to involve themselves with unlimited credit and high priced purchases.

Soon after the commencement of their term of service with such a master, they are up to their ears in a debt, which grows and is subsequently handed down through the generations.

The wretched Indians, bound by a strong inherited code of honour concerning debts, and usually too simple to understand what has been going on anyway, find themselves virtual slaves to the *hacienda* for which they work. And, of course, if the estate is sold, the Indians and their debts go with it.

In South America tales filter through to the traveller of *padrones* lassoing their dismayed peons for the entertainment of guests, and galloping off with the wretched Indian bouncing in the dust of the horse's heels. There are other tales of hosts extravagant in their hospitality at the expense of the female Indian 'slaves'.

But the peons at "our" *hacienda* were content. The regular Sunday pay-day, on which all monies without subtractions were paid to the Indians (who then had the opportunity of settling in part, if they wished, any of their debts) gave true evidence of the fair way in which our host ran his business.

On these Sundays there assembled more Indians than I should have normally imagined worked within a hundred miles of the *hacienda*. Many, no doubt, brought their "in laws" and "to-be's", whilst others probably came from neighbouring estates to join in any excitement that might be going on.

And if monkeys chattering—donkeys braying—peons bargaining for coloured clothes and cheap Japanese shirts—hogs squealing—poultry, encouraged by what they heard, offsetting contributory noises—dogs barking—payroll calls, and a staged cock fight don't constitute something that veers towards excitement, then Sundays were quiet.

"Panama hats"—Ecuadorian of course—were for sale at prices which made their purchase really attractive. The splendid thought of being able to wear a new hat per day unfettered my extravagant inclinations and held me mesmerized near the stalls.

On such a day, in an atmosphere of similar "peace and quiet" an explosion occurred one or two yards behind me.

A great many people have their bugaboo and I am no exception. It is almost a certainty that a sudden face-to face, high powered glance from an octopus in the same swimming-pool as myself would be fatal, but explosions don't often disturb me.

At first, through the powder smoke, it seemed that someone had sabotaged the chicken run. But ultimately it turned out to be the sort of accident that is seen only once.

The few Indians who own guns generally buy their own powder and shot in loose form and refill their own metal cartridges.

Apparently a peon had packed his with its full quota of explosive, after which he had proceeded to ram the tight contents with the flat head of a large nail. To be even more original he backed the point with the middle of his palm and had held the body of the nail with bent fingers.

Finally of course he rammed the powder too fiercely.

The nail is probably still travelling. The hole that he blew in his hand was beyond description.

Before I could find a stick for the tourniquet which I eventually put on his arm, one of his friends drew a handful of coarse coffee from a bag and threw it into the wound. I had never heard of this before. It certainly delayed the bleeding. The wretched victim sat with his hand dripping and said nothing—

The nail was probably a rusty one since there were several of the type about the patio.

The man was a mystery. He did not belong to the estate. He stayed for most of the day and the wound did not appear to be infected.

His purpose at the *bacienda* was never definitely proved. Once before he had been caught stealing supplies.

CHAPTER XIV

DESCENDING that precipitous trail was like riding on a Giant Dipper. In a sunny stupor we rocked about on the horses with thoughts that floated between peaks and blue-hazed ranges. The animals took the initiative and in the lethargy produced by the warm atmosphere of the valley we were sleepily unresponsive to their decisions.

But a sudden slide across the face of the volcanic boulders dotting the mountain side, the twists and crevice plunges of the hazardous path, the frequent stomach loosening drops, when the horses decided on short-cuts occasionally brought us uncomfortably back to earth — sometimes too literally.

Two thousand feet below our level the valley curved into the distance and out of sight directing that winding Río Pastaza — where?

From sheer guesswork — past the base of that black but snow-capped mountain. That plunging river, we knew, could lead us through the greatest natural fortifications in the world

through those Andes with sheer walls to the tropical warmth, rains, colour and unknown, of the *Orinoco* jungle beyond. I have said sheer walls. Yes, I was to learn in time exactly how sheer they could be. And that black mountain. In reality a volcano, it disguised all appearance of ferocity under a heavy mantle of snow. Yet in 1919 pressure from within became too great and molten lava and pumice rained into the Pastaza stopping its flow, devastating the little town of Baños known as the gateway to the *Orinoco*. And it was towards Baños that Soany and I directed our thoughts as we heaved about in the armchair saddles and rode down the valley towards it.

Baños — meaning "baths", in actual fact they were medicinal springs said to cure anything from a head ache to melan cholia. Baños — another rendezvous for the East and the West — the farthest West that the East would come, and one

of the unofficial eastern limits to more civilized Ecuador Baños described by Mary Blair Niles as the greenest village she had seen in Ecuador

The Pastaza valley represents geological strata gone mad, a loose conglomeration of volcanic chaos. Frequently it landslides to the road which incidents are taken as a matter of course. Nearing the little town the valley narrowed into a deep gorge, so deep in fact that we afforded ourselves innocent amusement by dropping several stones together and watching them plunge on and on downwards, gathering speed yet never seeming to reach the bottom until, when we had counted slowly well into the teens, they would dash themselves to powder on the damp rocks below.

Overlooking the little bridge from which we conducted these gravitational experiments stood a full sized cowled and canopied image of San Martín, holding a crucifix. The effect was certain heartening to the traveller about to cross the little bridge many hundred feet above those tormented waters. It was inspiring, consoling, and gave sanctity to a fierceness which might otherwise have engendered thoughts of disaster and depression.

Down that dusty, rocky main street with thatched mud huts on either side of us. In the distance a cascade poured from one of the hills which formed the hollow called Baños.

There were the usual small child nurses dressed like little old women with their thick skirts reaching to the ground, their uncombed hair, their melancholy expression, and their little brothers and sisters of a year or two younger suspended in a crude Indian shawl from their minute backs. These little "nurses" could frequently have not been more than four years of age. Already they looked strained and played out.

Again Indians in *panchos*, bare footed, and calico-trouserered to the knees, wore the same yellowed basin hats. But these peons were different to those of Riobamba, here that look of inanity, that completely beaten appearance, was rarely to be seen. These people seemed almost happy, an infrequent sight amongst the Indians of Ecuador.

Perhaps these people were individualists. Nowhere near

Baños had I seen a *hacienda* . . . or signs of the soul killing *padrone* system. Perhaps these people were free . . . perhaps with the gateway to the *Oriente* jungles, representing two-thirds of Ecuador, at their doorstep, they drew confidence from the obvious opportunity to escape . . . to escape if the slavery which had ensnared most of their people threatened themselves.

And could the presence of hot and cold mineral springs have brought about any part of this naive geniality which occasionally flashed from one shiny face to another. It had originally been my impression after travelling the rounds of Riobamba and other markets in Ecuador, that peons and 'Lifebuoy' were strangers to each other . . . that even if an Indian had a bygincic best friend, the latter never gave away that important hidden thought. It has always been my experience during travel that, after several days without the amenities of a bathroom, one is more inclined to smile with a lather, than without. So that perhaps our Indian friends did find their key to good-humour, in the bathrooms of Baños.

And what of these bathrooms?

Sonny and I now flaunted moderately successful Spanish phrases and with these managed to keep ourselves from being encouraged into the many connected water cubicles from which emanated a very slight departure from the sound effects created by occupants of bathrooms in New York and London. Two disgruntled peons were dragged soap-sdden and unseeing from their respective pleasure havens and we were invited there instead. When we declined in favour of the hot open pool the waiting queue rushed the vacated sheds, and the two that had been thrown out on our behalf appealed to us in protest, adopted a martyred demeanour, and finally washed in a gutter of the hot torrent that overflowed from the swimming bath which we intended to try. Water both hot and cold fell from a hill above the pool. The district is volcanic and whilst the snowline cascade is hamessed and diverted into one half of the swimming bath's controlled trap-tank, a fissure only half way up the mountain ejects a steaming flow which runs into the other compartment alongside the cold. So that if the swimmers care to boil themselves they have only to adjust the flow of one or the other.

Sonny and I were quite fit. We had nothing to cure except cramp from the many mule ride, and that went at once.

So we plunged about violently until finally a too-comfortable torpor overcame us. I thought of boiled bully beef.

Above one of the cascades, goats could be seen playing about the hill. At one end of the pool Indian women were pounding and scrubbing clothes. More people flopped into the bath. Somebody altered the cold water flow control—

At one time in my life I had regarded a warm finish as the most pleasant extreme finale. Yet shortly afterwards, when I heard a crab squeak on being immersed in boiling water, I placed certain reservations on this idea.

Now I was ready to "squeak" myself. There was no doubt about the rise in temperature.

Then plunging across the pool to throw off that shrunken feeling, I was caught broadside on by a very hot stream from the 'tank'. My mind flashed back to a school-day thriller in which an Oriental had blandly glinted at a white man boiling in a cauldron.

Suddenly the hot stream found Sonny. Or perhaps someone was killing a pig. Ee-e-e-o OW!

We reached the side, and rolled gratefully on to dry land.

Yes, Baños had a market!

The whole thing was there complete with *chicha* plus its watery-eyed imbibers, and the stalls of flaming colour. There were the usual live-stock, the inevitable bamboo flutes and dancing, and the strange concoctions for which the palate, if it is not Indian, requires much education.

All these constituents of the market were settled in front of the church which in no way lacked attendance. Its congregation overflowed through the open doorway. Squatting peons lazily pushed each other to allow an occasional veiled and mantilla'd figure passage.

My borse was clop-clopping a loose shoe on the rough road. Where was a blacksmith? The little crowd who always follows strangers seemed to know. They led us there and pushed him forward. The blacksmith gingerly took the borse's leg, tied a

rope around it and jerked hard. Both the borse and I nearly fell on top of him. After that I did the job myself.

Our stomachs told us that it must be past midday. Then where . ?

"La Villa Alemana, señor?"

The Villa Alemana was run by Mr and Mrs Von Hartrott, and run very well. Their long veranda'd "colonial style" bungalow was a guest bouse, the acme of cleanliness, with well kept tables. And I still have the recipe of their very special Whisky Sour which restored life from where it had been boiled away and a temper which had been tried by a blacksmith.

These good people ultimately became very good friends of ours, and were responsible for nursing an English friend of mine back to health from a very sticky illness.

And above the guest house, above the hot mineral pool, above the little mud-hut village of Baños, the black mountain towered with its white cap.

"That is Tunguragua", they told us.

No, the Villa Alemana had not been there when it had erupted and damned the valley. But, at night, occasional showers of red sparks could be seen bursting from the top. Yes, it had been fairly quiet for sometime. But you never knew. . . .

After lunch we rode to the falls of Agoyan. It is really Agoyan which marks the Gateway to the *Oruente*, for here the Pastaza valley narrows and the hills converge to form a very grave looking chasm . . . one of the few places where a pass is found in the Andes of Ecuador.

And to ironically bring us back to earth from the beauty of this blue-green torrent pouring two hundred feet in the solid, concentrated way of molten metal, an internationally-known firm, whose special line, incidentally, is removing headaches, had slashed an over sized version of its trade-mark, in coloured paint. Beside it loin-clothed Indians "from inside" stared at us as we took in the phenomenon of all this unharvested power.

Baños had seemed warmer than the rest of the Andean towns. We had been told that it rarely rained there. But here beside Agoyan and the tattoo'd *Oruente* Indians the atmosphere had even further warmth. It had become moist. Ferns and lana had appeared.

Undoubtedly this was where East met West

It is one thing to refer theatrically to the Andes, over whisky sodas in a heated New York suite, and quite another to find oneself tucked away in a corner of the almost deserted world at their base

Odd feelings overwhelmed me as I stood listening to the roar, not just of the falls, but of Agoyan's echoes, the echoes of the atmosphere, the echoes of the occasional birds, the splashing, the occasional crumbling of rocks, the slight breeze. All these sounds chased one another from the top and bottom of the gorge, from the direction of Baños, from the fog layers being stirred occasionally by the eddies of wind. It was like listening to an amplification of the story that a sea shell tells when it is held close to the ear.

Sonny was off his guard and appeared to be impressed. Usually his tense moments occurred when others seized upon levity. Similarly he pointedly observed the ridiculous when others attempted to be profound. But this apparently was not one of those occasions.

The small cascades hurried to join the volume of water which hurtled to the Rio Pastaza's lower level. The Pastaza in turn, sweeping out of sight around the cañon which cleft one of the world's greatest mountain ranges, rushed on to join the Amazon and it carried the imagination with it.

Having preliminarily surveyed what we could of the expedition's intended trail, we could think of little else except what lay on the other side of the Andes, beyond this cañon which had allowed the couple of *Oriente* bystanders passage to the west.

Not only did the eyes of these two lightly-coloured, slightly clad gentlemen refuse to blink, but their mouths appeared to hang permanently open. They carried baskets on their back. Presumably they had something to sell. Although we didn't think of it at the time, it was possible that those baskets contained *santras*, or shrunken heads. Quite a business is done between the inhabitants of jungle Ecuador and those of the civilized West, with these blood thirsty objects. After passing through the hands of a number of middle men, they usually reach American tourists, who often find that they can sell them at a thousand per cent profit.

Trade reached a point where it was very good indeed and everybody commercially concerned in the deals was of course very happy until the Ecuadorian government found evidence to suggest that the Indians were solving their "mother-in-law" and "hôte noire" problem the easy way, that in an effort to keep up with the demand for their commodity, the "factories" were creeping nearer and nearer to civilized Ecuador.

So it was arranged that a fine of thirty pounds should be imposed on anyone found taking a *tsantsa* out of the country.

But the traffic still goes on.

Sonny had never seen one. Neither had I. During our stay in Ecuador we were to be shown not just *shrunken* heads, but a life size one only slightly treated. There was a certain amount of mystery about it, but the head had been acquired by its owner as a gesture of affection towards the victim, who had once been his servant. There were two bullet holes on either side of the *tsantsa*.

We did the ride up that mountain switch back trail in stages. The journey back from Baños had been consummated at the bottom of the valley by a 'round up', which the helpless peon guardian of the two stray bullocks must have regarded as very unnecessary.

But temptation is a snake in the grass. It creeps up behind you and is just as liable to point out that you are riding in a real Mexican-cum Hollywood saddle, equipped with a lariat, and that those two steers won't mind a clean healthy run . . . as not.

Could the written order for two five gallon hats which issued from the *hacienda* a few days later, have been solely prompted by necessity?

This was in any case a colourful and theatrical country. The bead gear was not out of place.

At the third stage of the climb near the *hacienda* road, a young peon projected dismay at a sack of fallen oranges, which were still anchored, with complications, to a scraggy ginger pony.

String, which ran from the animal's tail muscles, had a dual use. It was also meant to keep the sack from dripping fruit.

A piece of cord twisted around the load, put pressure on the beast's gullet, and wrapped once around its off side leg

Both peon and horse looked particularly unhappy

Then once again the animal stood loaded, this time without the disadvantage of the hill slopes. Its four feet were now planted firmly on the *hacienda* road. Sonny and I tore at oranges with our teeth.

All might have gone well had the young peon not also decided to mount. His argument was that there was insufficient binding to keep the sack in place. He would hold it.

Then the show began.

The sack fell underneath the pony's stomach when the young *cholo* had pulled on it for support, and miraculously hung there.

Both the boy and the animal sensed further complications. The former waited for them, the latter decided on self-expression.

A vision, alternately of hoofs and a boy's head, of the pony's head and the young peon's heels, gathered speed and disappeared around the bend. Without much loss of time we mounted and cantered to the rock around which the trail twisted. Several hundred yards ahead a cloud of dust sped towards our host's estate. Yes, we could just discern them. Rider and horse had not parted, but Sonny pointed to an orange at the side of the road.

At a small near by estate owned by an elderly *senora* and her sister, we had arranged to meet a member of the family whose hospitality we were enjoying. The day had been a full one. We would both have preferred to return at once to the *hacienda* which was in sight rather than add to our journey with this unfamiliar side trip.

This small estate was only occupied by its owners for two months in the year, we had been told.

"For their health, or?"

"No, they like a little quiet whoopee."

What "whoopee" could be had in these dilapidated surroundings. When we rode into the courtyard through the 'half light', it was obvious that there were no other horses there. Everything appeared to be deserted. Sonny became depressed. Then an oil lamp arrived and another.

Yes, our friend had left, the peons told us, but wouldn't we dismount and call on their ladies, who wished to offer us a token of their hospitality?

We had no wish to be discourteous, yet we looked at one another. Our thoughts appeared to coincide and Sonny disgustedly muttered something which sounded like "Tea—hell!"

Then we remembered that these were friends of our host and we dismounted to be led inside.

The tide had been hot and fatiguing. Sonny ran his tongue around his mouth.

"Another Baños 'plunge' wouldn't be out of place," he said, "and—"

• "A Villa Alemana 'whisky sour'?"

"Ye-ya as let's get out of here soon!"

Lights began to arrive as we waited in the shadows of the dreary, cobbled patio. A room became gradually illuminated as the lantern parade increased, the last man bringing a powerful spirit lamp.

This "room" into which we were shown was surprisingly ornate. Pictures of virgins hung on the walls, moderating an originally elaborate interior where lavish entertainment must have taken place in the past.

Looking at the chandeliers and the scarlet of the Old World chairs, I thought at once of Hollywood and all the kings Louis of France. Here was a fading ballroom of an apparently extravagant era, high in the Andes, and several hours from any civilized town. What guests could have been entertained in those past generations, on the scale that this paling glory appeared to suggest? Who could have entertained them?

Soon we were to know.

The lights were supplemented. The room was now brilliantly illuminated. And suddenly two charming Spanish ladies came to greet us.

They had heard and read so much about the Expedition—wished us every success—had the Capitan arrived yet—no?—what a pity—it was their sole wish to meet him—

And were we really going into the *Oruza*? It was strange that few Ecuadorians ever went. In their father's time there had been so much fever there—and danger—

We assured these good ladies that, with our medicine chest and equipment, this would not be the case. We hoped that they would "meet the 'Capitan'."

Then perhaps we would drink to him?

A pair of American eyes beside me began to gleam. Sonny's expression had been gradually thawing, and now relaxed with good will, as our elderly hostesses of the moment busied themselves about some trays held by Indian servants.

"Now—you must try a little of this . . . and this . . . and this . . ."

Sonny gulped; tears welled into his eyes.

"Why it's a man's drink!" he remarked, drawing breath, his face positively emanating pleasure, "never had one like it . . . damned hospitable . . ."

"*Aguadiente*," cooed the two ministering angels.

Aguadiente neat—*aguadiente* with honey—with scalding tea—*aguadiente* (the translation is "teeth-water", presumably because of its bite) . . . made from sugar cane on the estate—a smooth, sweet and colourless drink—

We parted friends for life, and mounting, clattered over the cobbles through the high-walled gateway, to the trail.

"What's that, Sonny?"

"Quiet 'whoopee' . . . I can understand those old girls now."

My belief that Sonny ultimately managed several subsequent visits to the estate, to my one, was partially confirmed one evening when I found a string of fire crackers, which had not properly ignited, tied to the tail of my horse.

And as we rode back through the darkness, along mountain roads, a distant shower of sparks from distant Tunguragua brought home the length of our day's ride.

Yet that rumbling was not from Tunguragua. The "Black Mountain" was more active this evening than we had ever seen it before, but surely that bumping sound came from another direction.

Pulling the horses to the side of the trail, we had just time to get out of the way as the *Hacienda* lorry pounded around the corner.

It bore Eric and company, with—amongst other things—sixteen boxes of Grapenuts—

CHAPTER XV

"THE expedition will also attempt to locate a lake between the peaks of the mountain *Cerro Hermoso*, where, according to legend, the Incas buried a vast treasure about four hundred years ago . . ."

So had commented the *New York Times* on the day that we sailed for Ecuador.

To what treasure did it refer? Many times previous to my joining the expedition I had heard the word "treasure" associated with South America's Andean territory. I had heard of treasures in Colombia and Bolivia as well as in Peru and Ecuador. What evidence had Eric that this particular buried hoard was not a delightful myth, a subtle anesthetic, perhaps, to be conjured forth on "quarter days"?

In order to appreciate his convictions that there was "something to it" we must survey a few historical facts.

Most records suggested, incidentally, that the treasure Eric sought was not South America's "greatest". It had never been held that this lesser Ecuadorian treasure included, for instance, the "Special Caravan of two hundred and sixty tons of gold, carried on the backs of seven thousand carriers, the ten ton golden chain that the Inca monarch, Huayna Capac had forged for his first son Huascar, or the treasures of the Temple of the Sun". None of these glittering "visions" are alleged to have ever come within a thousand miles of Ecuador's treasure area, as they were instead conveyed from Cuzco, which lies in South-Eastern Peru, to Cajamarca. Yet they all constituted part of the ransom for the life of the Inca Atahualpa, which ransom the Ecuadorian hoard was intended to supplement.

What is the story behind the conveyance of so much treasure? Why was the life of this reigning second son of the dead Huayna Capac at stake?

And this is where our friend Pizarro and his Spanish Con-

quistadores again make an entrance, one that was to finally and completely mark "paid" to this powerful South American civilization

From an English point of view things might have taken a different turn if Pizarro had been brought up on the 'wall game' or cricket

Atahualpa, under a flag of truce, had approached these strange aggressive people. Why couldn't their demands be settled amicably? What did they want?

The Spaniards looked at the Inca, hatched his retinue, and threw him into a cell. This betrayal of faith was beyond the comprehension of the Incan code. Atahualpa again and again sought a reason and eventually had it disclosed to him that the "need" of these blood-chilling armoured foreigners, who entertained themselves by quartering his people between plunging horses, was gold!

Gold! The Inca king could lay his hands on a great deal of it. He offered to cover the floor of his parallelogram shaped cell with the metal in return for his freedom.

All this took place in 1533. The chamber in which Atahualpa was imprisoned existed until a few years ago.

Its floor measurements recorded at the time of the Conquest, coincided fairly accurately with those taken recently. The room was found to be about nine feet in height.

To the Inca's offer that he would cover its floor with gold plate, the Spaniards were dubious. Should they take him seriously? Was such a claim possible? From where could the Indian produce so much treasure? Their hesitation was misinterpreted. The prisoner raised himself on his toes and marked the wall offering to fill the cell to that height. With an attitude suggesting that he had nothing to lose, Pizarro, who was taller than his victim, scratched even higher and agreed that, if gold was brought in which could occupy all the space to that height, he would release Atahualpa.

Despite the fact that the Incas used no money, their monarchy exacted *tributes in the form of gold from the more distant colonies*. Their empire stretched approximately two to three thousand miles, and gold or precious stones flowed unceasingly from its extremities, for the decoration of the palaces

was again make an entrance, one that was to finally and completely mark "paid" to this powerful South American civilisation.

From an English point of view things might have taken a different turn if Pizarro had been brought up on the "wall game" or cricket.

Atahualpa, under a flag of truce, had approached these same aggressive people. Why couldn't their demands be settled amably? What did they want?

The Spaniards looked at the Inca, butchered his retinue, and drew him into a cell. This betrayal of faith was beyond the comprehension of the Incan code. Atahualpa again and again sought a reason and eventually had it disclosed to him that the "treasure" of these blood-chilling armoured foreigners, who encircled themselves by quartering his people between plowing horses, was gold!

And the king could lay his hands on a great deal of it. He offered to cover the floor of his parallelogram shaped cell with little metal in return for his freedom.

"If this could be done," said the King, "I would release Atahualpa." An imprisonment existed until a few years ago.

The floor measurements recorded at the time of the Conquest, coincided fairly accurately with those taken recently. The room was found to be about nine feet in height.

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Despite the fact that the Incas used no money, their monarchs exacted tributes in the form of gold from the more distant colonies. Their empire stretched approximately two to three thousand miles, and gold or precious stones flowed unceasingly from its extremities, for the decoration of the palaces

and temples. To our modern ideas of architecture, these palaces and temples would have been crude, ungainly buildings, but their gold and silver interiors, set with emeralds from the section now Ecuador, would have turned our heads. Few of Pizarro's present company had seen the glitter of Tumbes. Most of them were inclined to discredit Atahualpa's claim, though they knew that much gold plate lay within the Incan Empire. But Pizarro had not forgotten what he had seen on the coast. His prisoner was allowed to issue the command, for "more of the same".

Taking into consideration the fact that even with our modern methods of transport, we would use the better part of a day in merely removing our persons from London to Cornwall, or several days if travelling by fast train from New York to California, we can realize that the summoning of so much treasure by the Inca was not exactly a lightning matter. The Spaniards, despite the fact that they had entered into a deal in which they had only partly believed, became impatient from the first. This impatience was beginning to have brutal repercussions on the Incas when gold arrived and continued in a slow, but steady stream. A fairy tale of imaginative people was turning into actuality.

The conquerors clamoured for more. They were not to be content.

Trouble began for Atahualpa when Huascar, his elder brother whom he had deposed, offered double the amount of treasure, as his own ransom. The Spaniards decided that as far as Atahualpa was concerned they had made a poor deal, and that since he had passed the word necessary to start the wheels of the gold machine, his further existence meant little to them.

So on the twenty ninth of August, 1533, at Cajamarca, put him to death, first offering him the choice of an easy end (if he accepted the Catholic faith) or, alternatively, a violent one. It is said that he chose the former finish, having already seen much of the inhumanity of his captors. He was strangled at a stake in front of an open fire.

A point to note is that the name of the padre who baptized him, and who officiated at his funeral, was Valverde. Whether

this was a relation of the Valverde whom I shall mention in a few minutes is vague.

So much for Atahualpa, except for the fact that before his capture he had been placed also on the throne of Quito, the present capital of Ecuador, by the death of his father Huayna Capac, and that his mother had been a Quito princess. Consequently during his appeal for gold a great deal of it must have been stripped from the temples of Quito and carried along the Andes, via that great monument to their civilization, which stretched to Cuzco—the "Incas Way"—parts of which we were to discover later.

As I have already intimated people interested have occasionally agreed that the treasure buried in the mountain ranges of Ecuador does not represent half the value of the already mentioned metal which approached the imprisoned Atahualpa from the south. This southern treasure has been appraised from recorded knowledge of the contents of the temples, as being of not less than one hundred and sixty million dollars in value, excluding any precious stones. Supposing then that the lesser Ecuadorian hoard is worth only a quarter of this other, forty million dollars is not to be sneezed at. We considered it worth investigation.

But was there any tangible proof of such a nest-egg? There most certainly was.

Word very quickly spread of the death of the Incan monarch at the hands of the Spaniards. If the Conquistadores expected the gold to continue flowing in they were wrong. The flow ceased. Just as abruptly the Incas whose empire had begun to crumble, hid their wealth.

It is a legend, and, to most Ecuadorians, a historical fact that metal on its way to Cajamarca from Quito was thrown into a mountain hollow which was ultimately flooded by a diverted cascade.

But what evidence was there to support this story? Plenty! And here the name Valverde again crops up.

Shortly after their conquest, some of the Spaniards settled to lives other than soldiering. One of them named Valverde married an Incan woman and attempted farming.

Apparently it could not have been described as an outrageous

success. Furthermore, it seems that he was not one of those to benefit by the conquest, for he was badly off and for one reason or another was shunned by his compatriots.

His position caused him bitterness and he was not happy. The knowledge of the wealth that had been near and yet so far caused him to frequently complain in violent outbursts to his wife. He would depict in glowing colours the things that he could do with money and outlined the life of ease and comfort that he would create. Perhaps there was a motive behind Valverde's disconsolate demeanour and fierce fits of active depression. Or perhaps the normal man's reactions to the realities of poverty were merely expressing themselves. In any case his attitude had an undoubted effect on his listeners.

No one appears to be quite certain as to whether it was Valverde's Incan father in law or his wife who led him over the mountains, across wind swept *paramos*, past glaciers and snow-capped peaks to the hidden Inca hoard, or part of it, but there is fairly evident proof that it was one of them, and that Valverde did go on this trek to his evident gain.

This penniless man with no visible means suddenly appeared as one possessing great wealth. Whatever his promises had been to his wife or to her family concerning their future comfort, can only be left to the imagination, but the fact remains that, soon after appearing in this aura of affluence, he disappeared and was next heard of in Spain living the life of ease of which he had dreamed and spoken so frequently.

During his active days he made no attempt to explain how he had acquired his fortune, but on the eve of his death he signed a declaration confessing that he had tapped a treasure hoard of the Incas, in an Ecuadorian section of the Andes.

To support this confession he drew up a guide to the source of his wealth and bequeathed it to the King of Spain, who immediately ordered that a certain friar should investigate the claim.

The Indians of the small expedition on this quest ultimately reappeared to report that the friar had been lost in the bleakness of the Andes. A party was commissioned to hunt for both the friar and treasure. It was subsequently unsuccessful in both its aims.

But the greater part of the treasure guide had been drawn up with fair attention to detail

"Placed"—Valverde wrote—"in the town of Pchileo ask for the farm of Moya, and sleep the first night a good distance above it, and ask there for the mountain of Guapa, from whose top, if the day be fine, look to the East, so that thy back be towards the town of Ambato, and from thence thou shalt perceive the three peaks of Llanganatis in the form of a triangle, the lake made by hand, the forest, and a clump of trees which are called 'the arrows'."

These trees, he said, were to be the principal marks—leaving them a little to the left and going forward in the direction of Guapa

The seekers after the treasure following this guide, came without difficulty upon the wide morass, and upon the two small lakes which were called "Spectacles", having between them a point of land shaped like a nose, in front of which there was the plain, or sleeping place. Here it was necessary to abandon the horses

Then they reached the great black lake which they had been ordered to pass on the left. They descended to the ravine down which dashed the waterfall, which in turn had to be crossed by a bridge of three poles, and upon the following day arrived at the dry ravine, pressing forward to another sleeping-place, which was to be recognized by scattered fragments of pottery

From this sleeping place it had been possible to pass on to the mountain of *Margasitas*—or pyrites—of which Valverde wrote "I warn thee thou must go round in this fashion—leaving it on the left hand—"

But the accompanying hieroglyphic indicates that it was, on the contrary, to be passed on the right. There the guide fails. Beyond that mountain of pyrites "none have ever located the remaining landmarks."

Abandoned mines were discovered, but the "tunnel which is in the shape of a church porch" was never found. Neither was the "cascade which runs into the quaking bog on the right", that bog "where there is much gold, so that putting in thy hand what thou shalt gather up at the bottom is grains of gold"

And no one ever reached the mouth of that tunnel which led to the treasure place of the ancients

Consequently the hidden riches lay, as far as could be supposed, where they had been last uncovered by Valverde, oblivious to the fact that men seeking them had perished of cold and hunger on the wind swept *paramos* of the Llanganatis

This guide was translated from the Spanish in 1857 by Richard Spruce, an English botanist. Dr Spruce himself followed it, like the rest, as far as the mountain of Margaritas. Up to that point he reports that the instructions "correspond perfectly with the actual locality—beyond", he says, "none of the remaining marks signalized by Valverde were to be found"

But he gives a reason for this. In his opinion, the difficulty, which had prevented him, and other seekers, from picking up and tracing the further landmarks of the trail, was due to a misinterpretation of Valverde's indefinite chart and directions for passing the mountain. This had been the stumbling block to all recorded searches for the treasure

The late Colonel E. C. Brooks of New York was not given to mental rampancies. He was practical and a business man. A graduate of West Point he had served the United States Army in Cuba. As representative of the American Banknote Company of New York City, he travelled throughout Latin America, spoke Spanish and knew the people intimately. Known for his cautiousness in dealing with and surveying a proposition in hand, it is unlikely that he would have spent valuable time on anything which resembled a flight of the imagination.

Yet Spruce's account of his attempt to follow Valverde's guide interested Brooks. He decided to prove the trail beyond where Spruce had turned back. Beyond, in fact, the Margaritas mountain.

Of course little was known about the route which he intended to traverse. His experience in exploratory work was limited. The time at his disposal presented itself during the part of the year when the weather of the Ecuadorian Andes was at its worst. His first attempt was a failure. Not properly equipped, drenched with rain, and with a small party of *cholas*

whose knowledge of what to expect appeared to be less than his own, he realized that it would be foolish to go on

But in preparing for his second journey, he at least had a slight idea of some of the difficulties which would confront him. He was encouraged by the fact that landmarks on the trail had coincided with the written guide, and this he studied until he considered that he had reached a solution which would enable him to pass by the mountain of pyrites.

So that at the end of the rainy season of 1912, with every thing as water proofed as he could make it, Colonel Brooks began again.

He found that his theory had been a good one. In fact, it worked. He was able to leave the *Margassisas* mountain behind him, the first man since Valverde to have done so. In the far distance he saw the "three snow capped peaks", which according to the guide marked the hiding place of the Incan hoard. The chart became easier to follow, but the Indians hung back. They were superstitious and the thunder frightened them. I might mention here that, from my limited experience of the Ecuadorian Andes, the only difference between the 'bad' season and the "good", up there, is that it rains and blows less violently during the latter. There is always thunder.

At the base of the conical peaks the Colonel came upon a small lake as shown on the map. Across the mountain valley was the "tunnel in the shape of a church porch". But it was becoming dark. The Indians were again restless. The thunder echoed around the hills above them. The explorer made camp with confident plans for the investigations to be carried out in the morning.

But a cloud burst, hail, sleet and the terrified shouts of his Indians awoke him in the middle of the night. His camp, set up at dusk in a usually dry but natural gutter, was flooded, the rain ran heavily down the mountains. The lake in front of him appeared to be swelling. With his shivering party he sloshed through water to the doubtful protection of a half cavern in the rocks.

A few garments and sealed provisions were all that were salvaged next day. The camp had been washed away. Yet Brooks still thought of the Incan treasure. He weighed the

situation and realized that even when the waters of the lake had receded he would need a boat or else have a wait in front of him during which the few provisions would be exhausted

That night decided his immediate future. Most of his men vanished. They knew why he had climbed into the mountains. There are few Indians in Ecuador who do not know the story of the gold. His peons had regarded the thunder and cloudburst as a warning from the spirits of the Incas who had buried it. And they decamped whilst the going was good.

Brooks, left alone with one Indian, decided on the same course, rather than face starvation or an end from exposure. But suffering in both ways they wandered about in the snow storms of the mountain ranges, with senses almost numbed to despair until found by a relief party previously arranged for by the Colonel.

Brooks died before he could try again, but he had proved that the treasure guide, as a guide, was no fake. It seems unlikely that Valverde, who, having such an intimate knowledge of the tortuous, weather guarded trail as to be able to lay it down in detail on paper years after leaving the country, should ever have penetrated so far into these uncomfortable mountains without any remunerative purpose. We knew that his fortunes had changed overnight. Somewhere behind the lake that flooded Brooks' camp was the key to his riches. This was fairly tangible evidence of the existence of a hidden 'hoard' of the Incas.

It was to this treasure that the *New York Times* referred

CHAPTER XVI

S the *Panama Star and Herald* had quoted—the main purpose of the Expedition was “to establish friendly relations with and study the Ssabela Indians of whom practically nothing is known—”

And ten days later in another article—“valuable ethnological information about the obscure Indian tribe is the prize the expedition hopes will crown a year’s journey and study”

“The present party,” said the *Literary Digest*, “expects, if all goes well, to explore a legend as well as study the Ssabelas”

It had disappointed me to learn, as Eric again reshuffled his equipment, that the idea of testing the story of the treasure was to be a secondary consideration

His mind was absorbed with Ssabela Indians and the plan of systematically plotting every river in their country. For even Ecuadorians had complained that the markings on the *Oriente* section of some of their maps had been drawn up by part guesswork. Being ambitious exacting people they demanded accuracy

In 1932 on the Upper Amazon, not very far from the suggested haunts of the Ssabelas, Eric had lived for several months with the Jibaro Indians, who make head shrinking their speciality

Wandering, or—to describe it more accurately—‘blasting’ about the *hacienda* estate which nestled at ten thousand feet in an Andes hollow, he resembled an impatient bull anxious to investigate the outside of a stockade, or a lion keen to get in.

Now and again I would catch his X ray eyes burrowing through the mountains which held him from his Ssabelas

“What are you looking at Eric?”

“Wha——? Nothing, where’s Hector? Where’s that——?”

“Is he all those things?”

"I told the little So and so to bring my map and compass, he's been gone fifteen minutes"

Hector was a young semi-educated Panamanian who had followed Eric from Guayaquil to Riobamba where, for one reason or another, he had been added to the expedition in an uncertain capacity

At the *hacienda* he was posted with George in our emergency expedition kitchen. George, who had turned so green after introducing his French palate to rich South American cooking, had managed restaurants as well as aeroplanes. So he assumed the role of meal taster in-chief when not arranging expedition supplies.

Outside our back veranda kitchen which had been boarded to be windproof, I had set up a shooting range. It was a very simple affair and consisted, at its inauguration, of a bent tin placed on a tree stump. My revolver, a .33 Colt, had been sent across the hills from a neighbouring *hacienda* for me to try "on approval".

"Okay George, put your thumb on Hector, I'm about to hole that target"

"Hector—HECTOR—HECTOR—COM'ERE—" Then in clipped French accents, "all right, blaze—I've got the—"

There followed a description of Hector and his forebears
I rattled at the target

"Haven't heard the tin"

Further shots and a momentary gap whilst I slipped the revolving chamber out sideways and knocked out the shells. Meanwhile an unrestrained French shanty would fill the kitchen and echo around the garden, rising in volume to the climax of a verse. Then—

"Start digging that ditch, you sonuvabitch"

"You're in the Army na—Hey, WHERE'S HECTOR! Where is that black— Hec tor—HEC—ah, I told you to sit by those vegetables, they've boILED DRY! COME 'ERE—"

Ye-ee-oo-OWI

Sounds representative of heavy laying on of hands. If it was George separating Hector from his scalp, there had obviously been due cause. Despite the fact that George had more than his quota of "guts", he was by nature a mild person.

Perhaps it was a case of the bad workman blaming his equipment but I was unsatisfied with the Colt and ultimately changed it for a Mauser automatic which was either true or else fitted the deflection of my eye

Peter and Mont had developed an Inca bug rather strongly at Riobamba whilst Sonny and I had been at the *hacienda*. They had conducted treks from the Hotel Metropolitano to the site of an old Inca village and had successfully recovered pieces of pottery. So that encouraged by reports at the *hacienda*, they concentrated on excavation in all parts of the estate where plough bullocks had sunk into loose ground

At the first digging they were successful in recovering a small clay basin of approximately seven inches in diameter. It was just bad luck that the point of one of the excavating picks had chipped a healthy piece from the rim.

During subsequent excursions around the furrowed hill-sides, when I accompanied them, they had no luck at all, but the bug very soon bit me too. We were not just digging for the pottery of those lost people, but with every new site we expected to bring up an Inca. The lucky first time had produced—along with the softened bowl—pieces of bone.

It is a well known fact amongst the Indians, that Incas were buried in a sitting position, with a filled container—such as we found—of *chicha* or other native spirit placed on their heads. The idea of this was that they should have sustenance on their journey to the Gods. Our imagination roped in the possible discovery of ornaments in gold. But we found none.

The peons who dug were too slow for me. The idea of fishing up a whole kinsman of Atahualpa was too much of a stimulant. Taking the shovel from these superstitious Indians who, preferred to have nothing to do with any part of the business, I would burrow intently downwards with a fervour which the peons failed to understand. Their eyes widened considerably. To them one always had the morrow.

In Peter and Mont enthusiasm concerning such excavations had reached their climax, before they had left Riobamba, and they now adopted an attitude of studied calm. After the creation of a few more bear pits, I developed this demeanour my-

CARE AT HAGIENDA



self and Sonny who, towards the end of these minor expeditions, had decided to come and find out what it was all about, was the one who dug like a maniac, whilst we squatted above these mining operations and spoke of the *Oriente* and Eric's plans to divide the party

His ideas concerning the *Oriente* had reached such proportions that this was the only way of covering the whole itinerary, part of which was to discover a new pass across the Andes

I don't mind admitting that the idea of the treasure lake had done more than just appeal to me. It seemed unnatural to be in a corner of the globe where one of the world's richest treasures was hidden and not look for it. And I had done what I could to arrange with Eric that I should be among those to make the mountain trip

It was finally decided that Carl Mont and I should be the chosen few. That is to say we were to find a new route to the *Oriente* across the Andes. But—

Carl, over six feet and genial, was an old hand at delving for treasure. As a young boy he had begun his exploring career in Switzerland. He joined up with an archaeological research group which had uncovered a Roman camp-site near Baden and amazed the older men by his personal discovery of ancient silver table-ware

Then in 1932 he financed in part and organized a salvage expedition to the wreck of the *SS Afric* sunk forty five miles off Cape Henry, Virginia. This expedition recovered the ship's safe

Whilst Eric was getting his *Oriente* expedition into shape in New York, Carl filled in time by attempting to trace a treasure on the coast of Costa Rica. There was not much time before he was to join the party in Ecuador, but certainly long enough to discover that the man accompanying him who was supposed to know its hiding place, did not. The latter had heard of Carl's affinity for treasure, and approached him for backing, suggesting a fifty fifty share-out.

Friend Carl was interested in the story. The fellow's father had shown him as a boy the storm-swept crag hiding this mysterious loot. For some reason unknown to me, the father

had not found an opportune moment during which to remove it. Apparently it was a family hoard.

After many years of planning to recover it the son finally chose Carl as a medium. When they arrived on the spot all crags looked alike. Finally Carl left for Guayaquil where he joined Eric.

Mont both a geologist and topographer had been manager of a Northern Canadian property upon which was found the largest gold strike in the history of Canadian mining.

It was unlikely that both these fellows would completely lack interest in the gold contents of the Andes. Most unlikely, for as soon as the Llanganatis Mountains, which was the last range that could be seen to the east, from the *hacienda* estate, were mentioned, the subject of the Valverde guide again came up, and it was debated, not very strongly against, as to whether the matter should be looked into.

In view of the bad luck and weather which had haunted the footsteps of Spruce and Brooks we decided to proceed direct to the "three Cerros Llanganatis" which we considered to be the peaks of Cerro Hermoso in the Llanganatis Mountains.

At the base of the three peaks referred to by Valverde there was said to be a lake into which the ancients threw gold. As far as we were concerned this would save the necessity for a longer circuitous trip from Pelileo. There was no need, we argued, to take the ungeometrical course drawn up by Valverde if we could already recognize a point at the end of the treasure trail.

I have said that we could see the Llanganatis Mountains from the estate. We could, but the estate was a large one, and it took us half a day's ride to reach a point from which they were barely visible.

It is incomplete to state that Mont was merely a geologist, topographer and mine manager. He had also studied medicine.

Having seen the way in which he straightened out the physical irregularities of *hacienda* life, I am inclined to murmur "And bow!"

For instance a small Indian entering the world decided to do so in reverse, with resulting complications. Mont rectified the catastrophe.

A pig had a cancerous growth Mont operated.

Parasitical life was affecting the intestines and health of one of the *hacienda* Indians. Mont went to work and had difficulty in restraining enthusiastic assistance from Sonny. Thorns entered feet, fingers were cut. "Where's the Doctor" as the peons began to call him, became the continuous cry.

As I took a lot of photographs, Mont frequently put his camera into my hands and posed with the latest "white bundle". It seemed that arrival dates had been speeded up. Certainly our host need never seek common labour outside the estate.

"How long will this go on? I hope we get away soon."

"Have you discovered what they do when there's no one like you around Mont?"

"Mm hm—they take one of those long knives and go down to the river. It's ten to one you'll see them working in the fields the same afternoon."

At nights the transmitter was tested and tuned to deliver signals on the wavelength arranged with the high powered station at Riobamba. At the same time the petrol-driven dynamotor was tried out. It worked well but was noisy.

"Scare any *Ssabela* we'll ever approach," remarked someone.

By day, long haired Indian 'porters' arrived and took away on their backs loads weighing eighty to a hundred pounds, which were to be carried ahead, through the pass by Agoyan, to an *Oriente* village named Puyo.

After Puyo what Indians could be obtained were to carry smaller loads "on account" of the jungle heat.

And then the time came for Eric to take his *Oriente* section away. He was to go a day before we were, so we took part in the farewell staged. The party accompanying, managed to find space on the lorry, which was loaded with duffles and camp beds. Two new acquisitions were an interpreter who spoke some *Quichua*, and a dog to whom George had turned after moments of despair with Hector. He called it Napo.

"Hector—has anybody seen Hector, is he aboard?"

"HECTOR—blast his black hide, where is he this time——"

A stentorian chorus of the same call.

"HE-E-ECC-TOR-RR—Hector, come on now, hurry up."

Hector climbed aboard. Poultry clucked its way from the slowly-moving wheels of the truck. The *Oriente* party were away.

Our host of the *hacienda* came with us for part of our trek into the mountains. He rode a mule whilst we were mounted on fairly able horses.

But the mule was the most capable. Where a horse would hesitate, stumble, jib or slide, the mule would plod successfully along. It seems ridiculous. It appeared to be so at the time. What has this mule that the horses haven't, I asked myself. Certainly cunning. It undoubtedly used its brain.

From the top of the first range of hills, we looked at the now very minute *hacienda* nestling at their foot. To this point the road or path had been fairly solid. Afterwards it became muddy and we left open country to pass through forests which, despite the altitude, were of tangled *equatorial* growths. I did not comment on this at the time but it seems strange to me now.

Emerging from the woods into an open clearing, we came upon peons grouped among oxen around a native hut.

Some of these mountain *cholos* fitted the "load-brackets" which we had brought from New York, to each other's backs. I stood watching them as, having strapped on the brackets, they slung on the cases of supplies and rolled tents.

It was hard to find any definite expression in their faces although I could catch a grunt as they momentarily wriggled themselves like horses adjusting a saddle.

The brackets may have made things better for them or they may not. We saw to it that no peon carried more than he could comfortably manage, but these men were ultimately to amaze me. How would you care to jog up hills with a hundred pound weight on your back all day? That is what these fellows did and they outpaced the oxen and frequently the horses and ourselves. Yes, the oxen were loaded and carried the heavier things like the cases of kerosene. Yet something in the constant swaying and sloping of the trail affected this cargo for the tins leaked after a few miles.

It had been my idea that I had learnt something of mountain

riding in Australia but, of course, that was just my idea I have spoken of the Ecuadorian Andes as representing, in parts, geological chaos and this, perhaps, was the cause of the irregular passage. It was not an uncomfortable first day's ride. Nobody could be uncomfortable in armchair saddles such as those, but the horses must have felt the journey.

Midday came and we were riding and sliding down the face of large boulders. But it was a new experience finding myself at angles that I had thought only possible in "tilted-camera" Western movies. But it was not unpleasant.

Around one o'clock we dealt successfully with raspadura sugar—which is like a brown candy toffee—between slabs of tasteless *cheese*. I will not call it cheese, merely a distant relative of that toothsome food product. It looked as if it had been made of milk separated from the cream.

However, with raspadura it tasted well, but I think that in rarefied mountain air, for we had been climbing most of the time, a few good husky pieces of beef between thick rounds of bread would have put a different complexion on things. Our ideas had dwelt too much on concentrated food.

We ate in a mist which had been there all the time. It was damp and when we resumed the journey it wasn't possible to see more than three or four peons ahead.

Compasses hung from our belts but they were of little use because the trail snaked in tight turns and alternatively wide ones. Then it rained really hard for two hours.

In the afternoon it cleared a little of fog and we began to tire of all this sliding about, yet I repeat, it was not uncomfortable, and the horses' hides steamed and kept us warm.

Again it rained and hailed quite severely. This time there was not even a doubtful shelter as there had been before and we were compelled to ride through.

Our host changed horses with Mont, that is to say Mont took the mule and shortly afterwards the horse that *El Señor* had taken over, slipped into a bog and lay there. Finally it struggled out, having lain long enough to recover strength.

We rode along the tops of a very narrow range, along mountain lion and deer trails. When the light began to fail the rain conveniently ceased and we looked for a camp-site.

It took us an hour to find one.

We pitched camp not very successfully, having chosen what subsequently turned out to be the damp bed of a valley and to reach it we zig-zagged down a pathless eighty degree face. Don't ask me how, because I still don't know.

There were no branches for tent poles, yet somehow we strung up the tent. There was no wood for the fire. Yet somehow we lit it.

One of the bullocks got away. We caught it. Somehow we cooked a meal. We saw that the peons cooked one also.

We slept.

CHAPTER XVII

ON the second morning we encountered snow. Large patches spread over the trail. This turned sliding into slipping and skidding into sprawling. It was a new experience to ride down frozen rock.

Then towards the afternoon we dipped into a long valley, and about three o'clock could see the Llanganatis Mountains in the distance. The valley conveniently ran in their direction. So we rode along the hill-sides to keep away from the watery floor which gradually turned into a river, until it was evident that we should have to descend and cross it. To which Mont commented: "More darned fun".

The healthy torrent had reached a momentum of no less than fifteen miles per hour down this wide soggy valley. Somehow we had to "make" the other side-----

It is a "conscience-striking" business to plump twelve odd stone into the heavy Mexican saddle and sit tight whilst your pony grovels on its chest and tries to get somewhere. With piteous heaves mine would squat in the receptive mud to recover energy and then plunge again.

You could do nothing. Dismounting, your high boots filled with ooze and you were liable to part permanently both yourself and the horse.

The thoughts of these animals must have been bitter ones and by the look in the eye of my living raft, he needed only half a chance, to have truculently plunged riderless towards home.

My despairing four-legged friend was caked so thickly with the mud, as was the saddle, that I decided to take him through a deeper, though rock-bottomed, part of the river. He successfully stood up to the force of the water, but was not at all anxious to co-operate with any cleansing stunt. Furthermore the rain had begun again.

On the other side the going was even messier, for the bullocks had found their way ahead of us and had churned up the steep bank of soft soil. The ridiculous part about it was that, because of a twist in the volume of water which we had successfully passed once, a second crossing had to be negotiated. This section was not wide, but the banks were sheer, and the only way was to jump it. But the horses must have felt that they had been shod with the anvil.

The country now appeared to consist of small hills with furrows, which we rode along. It was no good trying to move at any angle to them so we let them mark our route and philosophically curved downwards and round the slopes.

This lengthened our journey.

Then the clouds showed their silver lining. They ceased to hesitatingly spit at us, which had been their occupation for most of the afternoon. Even the wind died to nothing and to crown all this good fortune the sun came out. If you have ever begun an exposed all-day ride through bad weather with occasional hail for several hours, you might find it an effort to ward off the discouraging realization that probably in another four or five hours you will still be cold and wet. It's a disconcerting premonition.

So that when suddenly the bare plains warmed under the blue gap in the sky above, and the mist disappeared leaving the horse's coats again steaming their welcome warmth, it was not only cheering, it gave us a new perspective of the country over which we had traversed. And now that sunlight suddenly unmasked a snow-capped peak of Cerro Hermoso, treasure-hunt enthusiasm gripped us all over again. Sometimes it's hard to remember that the bad things also have an end.

It soon became so hot that coats were discarded although the afternoon was slowly being curtained off.

Then as we drew towards the top of the range which looked across a two thousand feet depth of valley, to the Langanatis towering above our own altitude, we began to realize that this was to be as far as we could take the oxen and horses. That, somewhere about this point, we should have to form a base camp.

We decided on this with great reluctance. Having performed

such equestrian acrobatics along the trail, it was difficult to convince ourselves that there was a limit to hazardous riding. It was so hard to believe in fact that, for an hour or so, we rode from one high ridge to another hoping, almost knowing, that we must find a way through for the animals.

Yet every sweep of the binoculars failed to suggest a solution. How we should get *ourselves* across was to occupy no small part of our time.

But, while sun still flickered on a white tip of Cerro Hermoso, from somewhere above the range behind us, a shadow had settled over the rest of our world and again it was time to find a camp-site, somewhere less open than this high ridge which we had reached.

And so we turned back towards the valley, across which we had sloshed, and descended half way down the mountain side towards it.

Then suddenly below us was another of those occasional masses of jungle and we moved in its direction, thinking of tent poles, wind protection and firewood.

Yes, we found all those things and a sufficiently wide "shelf" on which to pitch a camp and loose the animals. Although our host preferred to anchor one or two of them to ropes.

It was odd that the last two hundred yards of our day's journey was perhaps the most difficult. The matted, twisted tangle, through which we drove the horses—we couldn't ride them—grew from one of the steeper slopes. It meant that the animals had to find their way and naturally they took the path of least resistance, which was not entirely a straight one. In fact it twisted both up and down the hillside.

Not infrequently these puzzled creatures found themselves surrounded by a thick net of green. Weakly they would stand with a difficult foothold, whilst a peon behind us, dropping his load, would draw a *macete*, and hack at the immediate barrier.

The second camp we called Bella Vista. We liked to think that the occasional view of Cerro Hermoso's highest white peak qualified the name.

Water was located nearby, but we could never find it in the form of a spring. So the Indians digging into the morass, constructed a muddy wallow, from which it was possible to

scoop a brown solution. This was successfully 'boiled' into water.

And with a base for at least a couple of days, here was an opportunity for experience with the packed 'larder'. An investigation reminded us that we should have to like Grapenuts "or else" —

The alternative was more concentrated food, vegetables chiefly, looking like flakes of coloured oatmeal in this form. There were one or two tins of "potted dog" but these were "emergency" rations.

With the food, there was a considerable amount of ammunition, and we had, as well as the revolvers, a rifle.

Two deer had appeared on the trail during the day's trek. The thought of venison cooked over an open fire already brought the aroma tingling across the palate. But we retired on stomachs packed with Grapenuts and felt well enough for it.

The first night's sleep at Camp No 1 had resembled a collapsed sack race after our struggle with sleeping bags. At Bella Vista we slumped parallel to the canvas door and I paid for my position farthest away from it, and consequently any possible rain or snow, by having to manipulate all those *etceteras* which constituted my bed, *before* the others turned in.

My coat and trousers formed a pillow and my shirt and socks rolled inside softened it. But if either the trouser legs or socks were wet, as on most occasions, I heaved the bulky duffle from my feet and leant on that.

The tent was a medium sized one, but it had a canvas "floor", eliminating the necessity for a ground sheet, so that if anything was lost amidst the collection of wet boots, discarded clothes and oddities to which we all contributed, then it was found again next day.

Mont was always second to retire and was not averse to annexing most of the communal blanket stretching over the three "sleeping bags", during the night.

Next morning our host turned back but not before he had accompanied us to the highest peak. We had risen to find a snow blanket covering the camp and an early survey showed us definitely that, far from the idea of getting the animals over the valley, we should have to temporarily mark time ourselves.

From the frozen ridge we debated as to whether the valley floor was the morass that the other had been. But it was too far below us to determine accurately anything about it.

Through the binoculars we looked east over the valley for life on the Llanganatis. There was none visible. Only thick, snow-weighted jungle scrub. The logical way to the valley bottom seemed to be straight down the steep sides of the ravine since one part threatened much the same as another. For about five hundred feet it was sheer with grass and small shrubs. These would certainly give us foothold. Then forest trees grew one below the other and finally developed into plain undiluted jungle which appeared to stretch well over a thousand feet to the valley floor. What would the going be like through that mass of foliage? Could it be much worse than the little wood which guarded our present camp site Bella Vista?

It was not much good ruminating. We should have to cross in time and something would work itself out. Having decided on a point from which to start when the snow had cleared from the slippery slopes, our attention turned to revolver practise with snowmen as targets.

This afforded our host more amusement than I expect he had enjoyed for a long time. Another quick nip in defiance of the sprinkling snow flakes, another bite of raspadura, and he would blaze again from the hip, accompanying the shot with one or two doubtful English words, which I hope were not a legacy of the expedition.

"But you can't call a snow man *that*."

"*Porque no?*"

"Well, I—shoot again—"

A blaze of shots.

"I shoot the little —— head, no?"

"No, at least yes, that is to say, give him a better name——"

"*Caramba, porque—ah-hi!*"

And *El Señor* would pepper away at the diminishing figure, just as a peon, ordered to build it up again, had managed to skip out of range.

We were sorry when he rode back along the trail. He was good company and had given us an amusing time at the *bacienda*.

Several days passed by before we were able to attempt the descent. The snow had cleared just as quickly as it had appeared although there were still traces on the ground.

As we 'packed up' every evening at dusk in order to save lamp-fuel, we were always up early and when the ravine appeared as it had been when we had first seen it, the peons were encouraged to pack quickly.

To give them their due, they did. This was most unusual and certainly strange when one considers that they held the Llanganatis in superstitious dread. Unusual, because South American Indians enjoy postponing anything that they have been encouraged to do. But I don't expect they had enjoyed camping in the snow, although we hadn't done so badly with the canvas floored tent.

Still, if the cold was their worry, they did not make a very profitable move. Nevertheless, they *did* move and we were lucky to get away by seven thirty in the morning.

It requires no effort to slither, if the angle is steep enough, and in this way we reached the jungle-patch. 'Jungle-patch', 'wooded scrub' or 'tangled undergrowth' does not entirely describe the obstacles which kept us from hurrying to the bottom of that steeply walled valley.

It is always easy to imagine oneself going down somewhere. Down a cliff, a man hole, a rope ladder, a greasy pole, but somehow our descent didn't work according to plan. We would burl ourselves at the mat of foliage, liana and fernery, which ran twenty feet or so before finding root, and were bounced back.

Again the *marbete* would be brought into use. Two peons hacked abreast and wriggled head downwards through the hole that they had made. Since our feet couldn't think and one would have lost sight of them anyway, we dived through the hole shoulders first. It is easy to say "dive". It wasn't easy to complete this motion. One was liable to be staked. You just wriggled hand over hand hauling yourself down, always downwards, towards the base of whatever you grasped, like a boa constrictor heading for its prey.

Then suddenly we were lucky enough to strike tapir trails. They honeycombed this wilderness, gave us groping space and

led us into a darkness where we hullo'd each other now and again in order to keep together. I thought of a one-time lecturer who had done his best to guide my learning to a reasonable standard. "Man," I had heard him once remark, "last swung from branch to branch in the fastnesses of Thibet." Whether his teaching bore any relation to fact is for the moment beside the point. But I was hard put to it to prevent myself thinking "Wog, if you could only see me now!"

The peaceful music of a trickling stream indicated that we were approaching the floor of the valley. The going had become easier and shafts of light appeared above us. Very soon we found the stream that we had heard and almost immediately looked across the bed of the valley which was hidden under long, waving grass.

The gently falling water was crystal clear and a great deal of quartz was scattered about. But there was no gold in evidence. We wasted very little time, though a spike in the foot of a peon gave us an enforced break. Mont of course went to work with his instruments.

If the fatigue of the descent was merely mental, the climb up the other side certainly evened things up. It was not as sheer, and not as thickly-covered with jungle, but whereas we had swung hand-over hand down into the ravine, similar trapeze acts constituted part of our journey away from it.

Despite the frequent necessity of "self haulage" up through trees in order to "gain ground", my severest obstacle to appreciation of the climb that afternoon, appeared in the form of a ravenous hunger. I have never known anything like it. Usually if I am doing anything which has the slightest suspicion of interest about it and a meal comes along and looks at me, I have only to tell myself that I have had it, and that is that.

But not in this valley. It had become an obsession.

"Let's stop and eat."

"Eat? Now? Why?"

"You don't want to eat now, Al, wait until we get to the top."

"Mont, I'm ready to eat right here and now!"

Yet I postponed doing so, though I began the same wail after another hundred yards.

However, there was a silver lining to the cloud that hung above my stomach. We reached a clearing, which moved away from the near vertical to a gentle slope. To satisfy ourselves we called it the top, and broke bread—or Grapenuts.

It made little difference to my mania which was changing to self pity. My goodwill towards the world lessened minute by minute. I have never satisfactorily explained it to myself, except that the rarefied air must have a lot to do with it. Bleak thoughts floated one by one across my mind and weak points in Carl and Mont stared me in the face. My appetite increased. My mind certainly wasn't well. I was becoming airy in the head, when we heard a shout—

"*Dantes*, that means tapir," said Carl rising and loading the rifle.

Yes, "*dantes*", there was that shout again.

The peons were jumping up from where they had squatted beside their loads. For the first time expression swept across their usually immobile features. They seized *machetes* which had been sheathed in their packs and brandished them in the air.

Carl shot ahead with his rifle at the ready. There was a lot of chatter behind a clump of trees. Cries that something was coming, no going, no coming, no—it had got away. And then there were shots from the Winchester carried by Carl.

When Mont and I rounded the corner, we saw nothing but a lot of disgruntled faces.

"Hairy tapir," breathed Carl, "big one ran up the hill looked at me missed it."

The peons returned slowly towards the packs. Carl with studied indifference, but obviously very disappointed, alternately "sighted", and blew down the barrel. Then there was another shout. A *dantes* was behind a mound further up the slope. The peons charged up the hill waving their cutlasses. We restrained them without too much uproar and Carl, beside himself with delight, sped like Mercury to surprise the tapir. He disappeared behind the knoll which hid the animal, and we heard a shot.

What luck? What had happened—why here was something bouncing down the hill. We spread out and the peons formed

a half-circle with raised *machetes* Near them was Mont, fifty yards to my right

The creature, giving an impression of a "black bear-cum-rhinoceros" galloped in our direction, with its head down I tried to think of all that I had read about tapirs Were they carnivorous? Did they tear out one's entrails and pounce upon them? I remembered that this type had three sharp claws—

Why it headed for me I don't know Probably, with its head down, it couldn't see well enough to make a proper choice I fingered my vest pocket 'putt putt' and wondered whether it could still spit metal—

It at least diverted the animal which, when only fifteen feet away veered, and headed for Mont and his disciples

Blood-curdling whoops, which might have chilled the *Conquistadores*, greeted the tapir, beneath waving cutlasses It turned and plunged up the hill

The peons scampered amidst the halo of shots Not giving Carl his due, I waited for Indians to bite the dust But the tapir finally fell and the peons stood unscathed

The calibre of the Winchester rifle coincided with that of my insect frightening Mauser and with the uncertain claim that at fifteen feet I "couldn't have missed", I disputed the suggestion that it was Carl's "bag"

All the peons and ourselves were in very good spirits but my 'hungerphobia' had not diminished But now it had an outlet—

Different visions floated across my mind Juicy tender mental fillets of tapir sizzled and spat from a stake over an imaginary open fire.

I don't like watching people treading on rats It distresses me to see that 'promising life-nipped in the bud' look on porkers' faces in provision shops Furthermore, after a few chapters of *The Jungle*, I went vegetarian for a month—

But here, standing before this nine hundred pounds of carcase, a mild man suddenly turned savage. Grasping my sheath knife with hunger-driven determination, I carved up that tapir in the manner of a demon Druid—

When I appeared with several "fillets" and my hair gorily

matted, Mont and Carl had already pitched camp and it was six p.m.

Yet something had gone wrong. That juicy tapir steak tasted like old shoes dipped in the wrong sauce. And that sauce left its aroma on everything for weeks. Even the cocoa mugs had it—

The chunks of tapir meat, which were not given to the peons, were strung up on tent poles. Did the fact that this *danies* flesh diminished nightly bear any relationship to the pussy-cat tracks around the camp.

Since the tent we slept in resembled a large canvas bag, we might have expected any night to be hauled off down the valley.

After the first fillet, we returned to Grapenuts—

CHAPTER XVIII

UNTIL I had begun to think about it, I hadn't really appreciated the extent of the surly reception from the Llanganatis range. It resented being kicked out of its old gardening togs into a clean collar to receive visitors seeking shelter, who never should have been so far from home anyway.

"Are you sure that it is to be only for a night?" it had morosely inquired of the strangers. And now in the optimistic freshness of the morning it wore a resigned expression of injustice as would a bull elephant that had been pinioned in its sleep.

Its backbone curved away from us to the south like that of a museum *brontosaurus*, with ourselves somewhere near the 'tail'. And it was about as alive, though the clamour of the Christian Brothers General Interest party (or could it have been falling water and cañon winds?) should have discouraged any dead thing from offering the semblance of its sole occupation.

But the attitude of this infrequently interviewed range was explained in the fact that it is only one of a large pre-war—possibly pre-every war—family.

Whilst its many brothers and sisters have been acclaimed by such "acclamants" as ribbon-developers, air transport and mass-mining companies, the Llanganatis has had to continue living its day to-day existence in the closed wing. In this hermit-like wilderness its nightmare has probably been a dread that somebody like ourselves would appear at the side with an agent's Order to View and catch it off-guard at the top of the stairs.

Yet the Llanganatis range should possess no unhappy complex from the fact that its physical attributes do not correspond entirely with those of the other members of Ande Ecuador's family, such as Chimborazo, Altar (which blew its twenty-seven thousand feet head off to leave standing two spikes of

nineteen thousand five hundred each) Sangai, Cotapaxi, Tunguragua and others. It has a grandeur and fineness of its own. Its party hat 'Hermoso' means 'handsome', even 'beautiful', and it is, even without its complete snow mantle, which was the way that we were first able to enjoy it.

To the east of the camp a valley evolved itself from nothing and a mountain spring appeared to proportionately grow with it, as it sped to a cañon which crossed at right angles a couple of miles away.

The camp clung at an angle to the eastern slope of a Llanganatis vertebræ. Here and there around the valley cascades could be seen contributing to an out-of-sight torrent which we presumed echoed that roar from the cañon.

Ah, yes, Valverde had mentioned a cascade.

From the tent and practically as far as the eye could see, tissue like bamboo grass suggested never-ending fuel for the fire. Or so we thought. It was certainly a welcome sight up here where there were so few trees.

To the north of us along the ridge at a lower level were strange mounds, small hillocks which, on the previous afternoon, had represented our tapir shoot. They dotted a comparatively flat shoulder peculiarly. At the most some were twenty feet high. I wondered about them but that was all.

With a Grapenut breakfast under the belt, Mont and I exhumed a couple of haversacks, a pick and shovel, two 'gold-pans', and the will to discover whether Valverde's quaking bog ('where there is much gold') lay in wait beneath any of those rip snorting cascades which poured down cliffs to the east. Yet we were a little premature.

Although a short climb of half a mile or so above the camp showed us a very splendid Cerro Hermoso, with three peaks towering above the rest of the Llanganatis, it was still some distance away. I cannot accurately say how many miles, but perhaps ten or fifteen.

Looking at it was not very difficult, but the problem of how to get there was undeterminable. The section in between was composed of high ridges, which suggested that any latent steeple jack ability should be brought out and dusted. Furthermore, the supposition that saliva was dripping from the

mouth of not one but a hundred quaking bogs capable of gulping poor explorers proved to be "not without justification".

Yet despite these facts, this "pinning down" of the treasure lake all seemed too easy. Spruce had apparently failed to even approach the three peaks mentioned in the guide. Brooks had reached them, but not without undue fatigue—the legacy of severe snow storms.

We smugly considered that his journey must have taken a very circuitous route, and that a little trigonometry such as our own would have dispensed with the necessity for worry over a *Margasitas* mountain which, in any case, we couldn't see. Our eyes coasted around the cañons and mountain tops and we topographically recorded impressions in field books.

Preferring not to risk the chance of bullocks being staked on tree tops or disappearing into the cañon "bowels of the earth", our patience, enshrouding the transport of equipment from Bella Vista to "Camp Three", had to be extended until the peons had made several wearisome journeys.

As for ourselves, strangled "seal-cum locomotive in-St Pancras" puffing and blowing heralded our return from any reconnoitre of more than a mile. The elevation of the camp was only about 15,000 odd feet, but energy was rarer than hairy tapirs.

Incidentally the tapir skin would have made a very usable rug if it had been treated the correct way. The hair was a rich black colour, about two inches in length, and was soft. Although we pounded at the hide with salt and soap and sent it back to the *baranda* per home-loving peon, the project went wrong somewhere and I only heard it again referred to—in good natured disparagement by our host—once.

After the 'excitement' of having shot it died down, our enthusiasm lessened considerably. The New York Zoo had commissioned Eric to produce in that city its first hairy tapir to be held in captivity and we had allowed the opportunity to slip through our fingers. Consciences were frequently 'dемblemished' by the fact that we were not in a position to have cornered it. Yet, armed with lassos, I think that we might have complied with the Zoo's requirements at this early stage.

However, it was too late and to be hypothetical was of no advantage. The fact that we could not, in this case, eat the meat was hardly balm to the point in question.

It took little more than a day to become used to the new atmosphere, after which voyages of discovery became more and more adventurous. With expeditionist number three 'hawk-eyeing' all annexable objects in the camp, two of us would sally forth to scale peaks and chip rocks.

Although only the unwise allows temptation into the path of a native, I doubt whether the Indians would have indulged in any pilfering. They had every opportunity, when carrying the packs, of "encouraging" the straying unco-operative bullocks. On those earlier occasions the majority of the peons had been out of our sight from the time they had jogged off until we had made camp. Later, in the *Oriente* jungles, I encountered almost unbelievable honesty. Here, of course, we were dealing with a different brand of Indian.

After two days at Camp Three, Mont and I picked up the pans, picks and waders and decided to descend into the valley which ran due east to ultimately join the cañon. Because it ran apparently north and south, we considered the cañon was an extension of the ravine holding us from Cerro Hermoso.

Finding our way to the bottom of this valley was no less complicated than in dealing with its cousin between Bella Vista and our present camp.

The "easy way" appeared to be that of squatting on one's haunches and allowing the precipitous slopes to do the rest. Whilst the mobile quality of the local mud rivalled that of the Cresta Run for patches of twenty yards at a time, the conclusion to one of these lightning rushes through space invariably occurred on the end of a stick, underneath a log, or in some thorny growth, the natural offensive of which impressed me more than on any previous inspection.

Once more we heard and sought the Alogonquin gurgle obviously nearby, and, having found it, had to climb slightly up the slope again in order to traverse less receptive though firmer ground. Yet the gain was dubious, for we had brought no peons to hack a path. The jungle was practically as thick as it had been below Bella Vista.

Then the waders came into play. With these we could walk the bed of the creek "splashing" in unsuccessful leaps from one submarine rock to another. Of course one could hardly have called those wave-making heaves "leaps". Most of the time we were lucky enough to keep the water level below the thigh-tops of the waders. Sometimes at the conclusion of an ambitious plunge I had the feeling that a refrigerated frog had been stowed away between my instep and the gum boot. It was actually a litre or two of ice-cold creek which had found its way "over the top".

Waterfalls appeared at our feet and suddenly the Culebra Cut walls bordering the rushing water rose sheer to a foliage sky. This, of course, meant a circuitous retreat and lost time.

Despite occasional deep gutters such as these and the growing volume of the stream, the passageway refused to widen for a considerable distance.

The 'mud bow's end' found us "putting in" our hands to a quaking bog. But apart from the resulting manicurists nightmare, we "gathered up at the bottom" nothing more than "grains" of ooze.

Not that our expectations had extended further, for as I have previously intimated, there was evidence that quaking bogs populated each valley.

And so, apparently, did cascades. They hurled their way downwards in a manner which would have impressed *babutus* of Niagara.

Grapenut time found us panning the river. There was nothing haphazard about it, for Mont was an old hand at the game, and I liked to consider that I could wield a pretty pan.

But no "grains of gold" appeared.

How far were we from Valverde's beaten or unbeaten track? After a lengthy séance of panning everything behind and below the water-covered rock ridges, we trekked further "down" the valley trying not to lose height.

Already we were two thousand feet below the camp. As we approach the cañon, bamboo-grass again appeared and there was evidence that many tapirs had slept in it. They had a habit of breaking down these tissue sticks into a rough square with one side of it bounded by a regular tapir trail.

This was a good sign. It suggested the possibility of a bloodless round up in the near future. Meanwhile the tapirs of the district sat glued to their observation posts and refused to show themselves.

The roar of the valley swelled below us with high powered rushing noises similar to the sound effects of a fire swallowing a heath a minute.

Then Mont pointed ahead—

East by north-east a husky black mountain towered over flat land and lesser hills with valleys. It was a considerable distance away, but in an instant had suggested the same thing to both of us. Friend Mont spoke the equivalent to the words already in my mind.

"Pyrites"

"Yes, old *Margasitas* himself"

Now Montfort is by nature, and has been by profession, a geologist. Practically any old rock to him is a thing of beauty—almost a poem—

I should never lay myself open to a snort from the (to me) British master of all rocks—one affectionately known in geological circles as "Erny"—by suggesting that my attention to his geognostic thunderbolts was ever as tenacious as the next man's. But it is always pleasant to believe that pyrites cannot fool one even if it is merely a constituent of a dark blur on the horizon.

Well then, if the *Margasitas* mountain was over there, how was it that the three peaks, alleged by Brooks to have "appeared in the distance" when he had rounded this 'pyrites' elephant, were nearer to us?

Whilst Cerro Hermoso with its humps (and we concluded that being the *Cerro* of the Llanganatis—Hermoso was the Cerro Llanganatis) lay off at an angle to our right, the *Margasitas* was further away and slightly to the left.

Would the Incas, Valverde, Spruce or Brooks ever have travelled in two thirds of a circle? Could the original Inca who led Valverde to the treasure have travelled first towards the Inca Way, along which the "ancients" were conveying the gold south to Cajamarca, when the order came to bury it?

If so, then the hiding place could not have been far from this

great road. Whoever led Valverde to it did not start from Quito as did the Inca Way, but from Pelileo which is, perhaps, a hundred miles further south.

It is possible that Valverde and his Indian had first to locate landmarks at the point near the Inca Way where the "hoarders" had turned into the mountains. The Incas may have turned off east or west. Who is to say? Certainly no one living to-day, although there are many who consider themselves to be informed upon the subject.

Some suggest that the Inca Way took a course from the north along the Andes to the *east* of Cerro Hermoso. If this was so, or if this road travelled until it approached the Llanganatis at an angle which, if it had continued, would have run east of them, then one can imagine the Incas turning in south west or west towards the three Hermoso peaks which rose to a height of well over sixteen hundred feet. And consequently the path taken by the person leading Valverde to the spot, (and therefore the only trail known and recorded by the latter), probably did traverse two thirds of a circle if started from Pelileo.

It was an interesting supposition with many pros and cons. However, I had always concluded that Brooks, on rounding the mountain of pyrites, had looked *eastwards* to the distant 'three pinnacles', but this could not have been so if it had been Cerro Hermoso that he had seen. But the path to be taken around the *Margassitas* has been debated many times in the past. The written guide, with its conflicting hieroglyphic, had proved the uncertainty.

And yet had it?

With each copy taken of other transcripts of the guide, few words of the story could have been lost. But the symbol drawn by Valverde representing the circumulatory route could have been badly reproduced, twisted altered. There was only one true way of being sure of the correct version and that was to inspect the original document. Unfortunately this is—for the moment—impossible for most people. For although the guide in the Spaniard's own hand, lay until recently in the archives of Latacunga, a town south of Quito, it was eventually stolen and has not been recovered.

Mont and I now felt that the mountain of pyrites was a better day's catch than any handful of gold from a bog. With much theorizing and dramatic talk, we took another mouthful of Grapenuts and proceeded back the way we had come.

This, however, was not quite the easy business expected, for we had carefully made an effort not to lose height, and had succeeded in this respect fairly well. But the conversational analysis of Incan life pleasantly dulled the effects of fatigue, and it was not until our muscles balked even on low gear, that we felt the need for special fuel. The rarefied height demanded it. A "cut off joint", with its couple of companions, would have done the trick, but for the time being this was "out", since the tapir had not been a gastronomic success. Yet the Grapenuts and concentrated foods were surprisingly nutritive and filled a gap more usefully than I would have considered possible.

We dealt with those steep slopes by crawling on our hands and knees. The knapsacks and their contents, of course, made the difference, and I evolved a mental note to exclude *etceteras* next time.

There usually is a top to anything alpine and we reached it, though some distance from the starting point of our descent. We could practically see the camp. That is to say it was hidden by a few minor hills. But "practically seeing" is certainly not "reaching". Progress dragged on in its tortoise-like fashion. And we eventually confronted patches of marshland.

Mont kangaroo'd his way to a solid hunk of Cerro Llanganatis, but the jump was not a success as the apparently permanent green patch disappeared beneath his feet and he slithered about in a dark slime and had difficulty in getting out again.

This "slime" was a mixture of mud and oil and on several parts of the range we subsequently found other evidence of petroleum. Perhaps the hidden wealth of the Llanganatis will ultimately be found in different form to the one that is quoted so frequently.

Slowly we found a soggy path around the morass. For some reason or another the waders had gone back into the knapsacks some hours beforehand. Anyhow, it was a little late now, for the knee boots which we wore had already been sopped into disguise by the weighty blue-brown mess.

Then being clever, I walked into the sort of sticky bog that one keeps in mind for relations, and began to sink. This was my first experience of anything resembling a "quicksand", but Mont held out a paw and heaved. And that, subsequently, was that.

Once clear of these bath tub pitfalls we veered hard aport and set a course for the mounds which had marked the tapir speedway.

Everything went according to plan and we approached them without further incident or mushy bathing, passing alongside a volume of crystal clear water slipping quietly down the hill.

The muddy episodes had left Mont and myself like something that the dog had brought in, and had constituted a wet and messy business. But the irony of it was, that after that exhausting and grimy 'return-climb' through forest obstacles we were bursting for a throatful of something long and cool. The chant in my brain throbbed with the familiar phrases of "Beer is Best", ". . . and again, Miss", "Guinness is good for you," whilst my mind tormented me with a vision of a long, frosted Worthington.

Mont was probably holding a post mortem on the expeditions canned "Schlitz" which had never passed beyond the Barclay Hotel. So that, as far as we were concerned, nectar from heaven and this fresh running steam had a great deal in common.

I took the weight off my stomach and slid back from where I had gulped mouthfuls of it, head downwards. The water clung in small bubbles to my week's layer of whiskers and I wiped at these with my unlaundered bandanna. The reflection of the handkerchief's colour in the pool held my eye. I gazed at it vacantly and for a second or two at another less inspiring image. Then my attention was riveted to something on the bottom. It resembled the stem of a cabinet minister's pipe.

I reached for it.

But the channel being clear was deceptive and I had to bathe in order to make my catch.

Yes, it was a stem, and of clay. Obviously it had broken from some carefully modelled pottery. And what was that,

more? There was another piece and yet another I wallowed again whilst Mont handled exhibit A in silence The chips retrieved looked as if they might not be from the same utensil

What party could have camped in this desolate region before us? Was it that of the Friar, Spruce, a tricer named Gutzman?

Mont looked through his glasses with that expression which preceded his profundities

"It's Incan," he mumbled slowly And as he made the remark, the piece which I was lightly holding swished into a mass between my fingers

We looked further up this channel and regarded it with an apprehensive stare that might have been fixed upon an octopus There were quite a number of smaller pieces of the same baked clay

As we tracked the flow, it grew narrower Would it issue from the ground in little fissures like a spring, or—?

No, it certainly didn't A powerful body of water about eighteen inches wide, bounded outwards from what appeared to be a manually-constructed piping system existing beneath the surface of the ground And a hundred yards or so above where it plunged regulated into the open, stood the mounds that were like little hills

Was there any relationship between them? If these mounds covered any traces of Inca habitation in the Llanganatis, what were they? We could only wonder and debate, for the energy which had lent itself to our day's work was expended, and shadows were again creeping over the hills

My head had turned slightly east of northwards, and my eye was taking in a section of the range Mont looked that way, too Then he planted his tense gaze on me as if waiting for comment

"Isn't that the outline of a very wide road—?"

Mont's spectacles glinted

'The Inca Way?'

His voice held no note of sarcasm We turned, and with new energy, plodded towards the camp

CHAPTER XIX

OVERCOME by trigger itch Carl shot a mountain deer. The shock was too sudden and any minute I expected my stomach to give a Yippee and dance around all that good meat clapping hands.

Anyhow it gave the *Grapenuts* a day or two off and brought that "cut off joint" several steps nearer. Fillet of venison beside red embers certainly became a fact that evening and, doused with a mystery pot of French mustard from the provision box, the tasty finale to the day's trek focussed our vision to an apparent Russian orgy.

Poor animal. It had a pretty head but to be unavoidably coatee, I have, as far as I know, a pretty stomach, which gets pretty hungry. And, in the words of Pearl Buck, "meat is meat".

It was a pleasant termination to the long day and the peons, who had shared too, sang songs about the Llanganatis, not songs that had been made up on the spot but regular established songs, songs that had been sung for probably many generations harmoniously echoing legends of the treasure, wind and thunder.

In a few melodious lyrics, they had all our future headaches taped. But steeped in well being and firelight it was easy to be indulgently adventurous and in this manner we retired and drifted off into a colourful Midas world. Of course I am speaking for myself but the original reason for our presence in this region—i.e., to locate another pass to the *Oriente*—had long been obscured under a welter of Incan anecdotes.

The things that we would do in the morning. Up early, that was the idea. The peons had been advised about a day-break getaway. All day we would travel and by evening should be camped under the three shadows of Cerro Hermoso. After

that it shouldn't be more than a day's trek to the lake. And then—

My infallible mental alarm clanged 5.30 a.m. I squirmed in the sleeping bag and rubbed my eyes at the sight of canvas six inches from my nose. The tent had practically caved in. Its area had lessened considerably during the night and, when I sat up, one side of it seemed to rest on the heads of Mont and Carl.

I gave the canvas a smack and the result coincided with my supposition.

Snow

I stepped over the others, untied the flap, and looked out. It was inches deep and flakes were still falling.

Carl, whose kidneys made a useful "foothold", subconsciously objected, and came out of his somnolent state.

Usually intent on preserving a calm demeanour which may or may not have been foreign to his temperament, he denounced the snow in terms which might have made a truck-driver wince. He saw at once what it meant. A curtailment of all movement, the postponement of all discovery. And no fires.

We had expected this last disjunction from hot meals, but it struck us more forcibly now that we actually had something to cook. And this seemed the wrong atmosphere in which to lap up iced water.

Bamboo grass was cut and rubbed free of snow under canvas by the peons, in an attempt to dry it (sufficiently) for a fire. But it was many days before success was achieved in this direction, and a long time before we had regular cooking.

Every day we seized what opportunity there was for a little exercise but, without a chance of drying, the 'habit' became less and less attractive.

Sounds that we heard at night, whilst the snow was there, were curious. Staccato "bursts" like a thin whistle, resembling the repeated transmission of a series of radio dots, produced a strange resonance which blended frequently with the nocturnal jargon. Altogether it was as if a number of hounds over the crest of the hill were whining and snorting in their sleep.

In the mornings animal footmarks were to be seen in the snow around or near the camp and amongst them were those of deer, mountain lion and tapir

A generous swig of hypothesis became the basis for a great deal of dubious reasoning and allegation during that enforced hibernation when we weren't playing cards

If three people are confined in a small space for any length of time, an intense yearning to cut each other's throat is liable to reveal itself, especially if the human machine is neglected. Yet things worked out extraordinarily well apart from an occasional silence following different points of view

Then, just as we had reached a stage where everything had been soggy for days and were debating the advantages of an igloo, the snow ceased and began to thaw

But the cycle of existence in our canvas hermitage continued, for rainstorms whistled around the tent. We were allowed one fine day in between the rain and the snow during which several deer appeared near the camp. I had taken the rifle on a two-mile trek over a mountain and found nothing

On approaching the camp I met Carl and Mont brandishing smoking automatics and wishing me to the lions because I harboured the only instrument capable of pinning leaping venison at a distance

We followed the trail of one which Mont claimed to have hit, but failed to locate him

In this gap between weather, we were able to make a good fire and dry the sodden mass which constituted the sleeping bags and a collective wardrobe. We enjoyed a fleeting glimpse of previous living. Then the rain came again. Our existence repeated itself as when we had been snow bound, except for the fact that rain has a habit of penetrating where snow does not. But finally the wet weather eased into a light drizzle and realizing that life anywhere up here would be wet most of the time, we packed and trekked over the range

Two visions during that journey stand out clearly. Cerro Hermoso, as we reached the crest of the range, and Mont slogging through half a mile of "quaking bog"

With this spongy "morass" the almost immediate discovery of two small lakes at once suggested the "spectacles,

from having between them a point of land like unto a nose, in front of which there was the plain or sleeping place . . . ”

This sauced again our liberal cud of Inca lore and we spread out to watch for other landmarks of Valverde’s guide. But it gave imagination a free hand and every mound and muddy creek assumed significance.

It was more pleasant to blindly eschew recent supposition that the trail and the treasure lake, to which the guide had led Brooks, were miles further to the east.

Picking my way down slopes and along old river courses I found Mont sitting on a hillock surrounded by not very substantial ground. It was the sort of place where all trails meet and sooner or later the remainder of the peons came trekking along, dismay written across their faces. We wondered if Carl had fallen down a ravine, but it was not so, though perhaps they wished that fate for all three of us.

The trouble was Cerro Hermoso. We were now very near to the edge of a cañon which separated us from the great mountain. The eschatology, which all Indians by instinct appeared to consider hung over it, was certainly affecting them. When they reached us, they temporarily dropped their packs and grouped together talking in undertones. Carl had yet to appear and I wiled away the time by shooting at my Stetson and expecting not to hit it. But in the various pot shots around the Llanganatis I had been unconsciously adapting my eye and Mont’s face contorted when I recovered the ventilated headgear.

Then Carl appeared with a great deal of theory and we penetrated a small patch of jungle-scrub, the kind that Hollywood is so expert in applying indiscriminately to Malaya, Hawaii, or the Congo—

Emerging in open marshland overlooking the ravine which protected the bottomless escarpments of Hermoso, we experienced another feeling of frustration. How darned black it was down there. ‘Protected’ was right, the problem of how to cross it was going to push the aspirin consumption sky high.

But it still drizzled which made it difficult to steep the mind in that attitude of good fellowship which is easy to command when one has dined well in warm surroundings. For again

there was to be no fire. Here everything remained sodden. It had been impractical to bring any of the systematically-dried fuel because of the amount required. It was the type that burnt quickly.

So we finally made camp, finding consolation in the fact that we were taking part in one of the world's more interesting quests, and the watered Grapenuts that evening tasted well.

With the weather continuing very much in the same way, time dragged on and on, and our existence moved in a close cycle. Laboured tinkering with a small primus stove was finally rewarded and then it was easier to think. Cooking in this manner was of course very successful but at that altitude the spirit ran quickly to low temperatures and it was an effort to encourage it back to vapourising warmth.

The loog marsh grass and rough scrub had been cleared by the peons over a small area and the teot had been pitched on sloping ground facing west or away from Hermoso. Twenty yards to the north the Indians had erected their two tent. They managed to dry sufficient wood over our primus to start a fire which was kept going.

A hundred yards or so to the west of us was a small lake and in the late afternoons wild duck were prone to alight on it. The ultimate result was a bag of two tasty birds.

High walls of the Llanganatis surrounded this marshland and mountain ranges stretched in mist beyond the cañoo which, disappearing north, evolved itself from the deep ravine between ourselves and Hermoso.

And with this ravine, what now——?

We looked at it. We climbed down to its sheer sides. We essayed a trek to the south and then east along what appeared to be a narrow ridge joining Cerro Hermoso with the Llanganatis. All this time it still rained and progress appeared to be more up and down than forward.

Our luck with the weather must have been worse than that encountered by Brooks, who had enjoyed straightforward travel until he had reached the treasure lake. Whereas his stay in the mountains had been a matter of days, our own represented weeks.

Certainly it was consoling to be so near to, though so far from, what we had gathered to be the three peaks mentioned in the guide as guarding the treasure. The atmospheric roar enveloping ourselves, and that first black snow splayed bluff with its two accompanying camel hump peaks, created the same suggestion of tempered power as might any major electric station.

The northerly face of the black Hermoso bluff represented a perpendicular drop of many hundred feet. The western shoulder of the last camel hump gave sanctuary to a major glacier. Wisps of mist overhung the mountain most of the time. Occasionally in the early morning it would stand clearly against the rarefied air. *hermoso* beautiful.

Then it would rain again. Yes, the ice-cold rain was depressing. Yet usually I enjoy walking in the rain, just as I enjoy driving at night, perhaps because both experiences offset something that seems unreal. But up here it was getting us nowhere. "Washed out", was the way Brooks had described his 1912 camp when the lake had flooded it. Washed out was the only way that we could describe our modern equipment. Water-proofed, yes. But we brought the water in with us. It hammered relentlessly at the almost air tight flaps—at the cases of supplies—at the peons who huddled in their canvas "shack", which was practically as good as our own, since it belonged to the owner of the *hacienda*.

With every thunder-clap around the gargantuan monster towering above them, determination to get out during the next calm seemed to cross their faces. They didn't sing. They didn't speak. If any orders were given them, they obeyed, but slowly, and with positive distress written across their faces. They were miserable.

We were sorry for them and knew what must be passing through their minds. Undoubtedly details of former attempts had been handed from Indian to Indian. Had they not forecast in song the cloudbursts and wind which we had experienced?

I became impatient. For weeks we had awaited the opportunity to survey a possible route to this neighbouring giant. How should I be able to join Eric now? According to an arranged schedule he should have almost completed his canoes.

OFFICES FRONTING AT LEADING FILM STUDIO IN HOLLYWOOD



on the banks of the *Oriente* Rio Villaflo, less than a hundred miles from Baños

Had progress been better, perhaps we should already have proved or disproved sufficient of the historical legend to know whether it was worth further attention. Mont and Carl might have gone on attempting to push eastwards, and I should have been able to report to Eric on the advisability of a properly staged trek into the Andes which, as it happens, he ultimately made, with unbelievable success.

But what chance was there of reaching him now? I was faced with the choice of remaining perhaps stationary at this camp until the close of the wet season, or of trekking back across the snowline to the *baños* and then via Baños on the long shot of catching Eric. But the shot would be too long—

Radio I had forgotten that part of the show. We had carried no apparatus on this particular trek into the mountains. Yet with a quick return I should be able to reach Eric through the Riobamba station and ask him to delay his departure down the Villaflo.

It was hard to leave Carl and Mont in their damp, sedentary, and almost esurient circumstances, but the weeks had swept by too quickly, and if I was to penetrate the *Oriente* with Eric's party, it was time to do something about it. So with a couple of peons I began the return trek over the Llanganatis.

I lay on my side in the small tent shared with the two Indians, my head just poking out of the sleeping-bag. In the opposite half of our "three feet-high" shelter, forms huddled together in answer to the chill of the night. Then one of them uncoiled, supporting himself on an elbow, and stared across at me. The small lamp burning continuously threw its glare towards him and his eyes shone bright like those of an animal caught in head lamps.

My sleeping-bag in the shadows gave him no clue that I was awake. He raised himself further and moving on his hands came and peered into my face. I looked at him through half closed eyelids waiting for his hand to reach for my money belt. But perhaps it was merely some curious urge. For after a wide-

eyed inspection he pushed himself back on his knees and curled into sleep

When I had first seen these fellows running up mountain slopes with hundred pound packs on their bended shoulders it had sickened me. Now that their heads were turned again towards "civilization", despite the fact that they carried the same heavy swags, I could not keep up with them.

The only time that I saw these peons grin in the Llanganatis was when they had to wait for me.

It had been our principle to fit them usually with no more than an eighty pound load, but they voluntarily added the extra twenty from anything lying around, despite the fact that other peons were yet "shoulder free". I expect they preferred extra weight to the idea of a possible double journey. And even on the "flats", of which there were few, it took an effort to match their gentle jog.

A heavy snowfall covered the Llanganatis side of that steep ravine where we had performed our ape like, arboreal acrobatics. So without waiting for the tent to be folded I began the crossing alone. It was better to be ahead than behind in such circumstances. I descended in moderately good time, whilst underneath the snow crackled stiffly in the way that is said to represent a temperature of "more than ten below". Then again that jungle mountainside. I solved the question of ascent by climbing up trees and swinging from high branches to the lower ones of others. I thought how appropriately my 'student-era' nickname of Kong could be applied to the anthropoidal figure clumsily crashing from bough to bough.

From the highest rock near Bella Vista I scanned the near-vertical trail now behind me, and capriciously wasted ammunition on rock targets. Then I turned my small Mauser down the several thousand feet gap to the valley floor wondering whether gravitation would carry a bullet to the Llanganatis side. But I didn't shoot, for across the marsh bottom moved Lilliputian figures, so minute that they seemed proportionately the size of ants. These were, of course, the peons.

I slid, scrambled and leaped down the furrowed slope to-

wards that first 'farm' in the hollow. It was only a corral, a small hut, and a handful of "grunt" Indians, but I mentally linked it with civilization, and after the complete bleakness of recent camping grounds it was a good sight. The sun shone pleasantly.

And horses—

But they literally weren't having any

"What about *these* horses—ask them again—"

"They say that there are none," came the barely coherent Spanish of the peon

"Come on, come on—tell them I'll buy a horse from them—or hire it and they can have it back—but get one!"

"They say that there are none!"

The bent figure carrying my duffle pointed

"Mph Pehleo"

"Pehleo?"

"Mph"

"Then we shall arrive very soon!"

A violent shaking of the head

"Then how far away is it?"

The peon flattened the present slight angle of the sun with a wave of his hand

"Then we shall arrive at night?"

"Mph"

Another small farm came and went. We were crossing shrubless fields which stretched together into a plain. Beyond this was the cluster of white, pointed out as Pehleo. The country was in the process of fairly practical irrigation, but the streams were wide. They formed a maze and occasionally we were cornered. But, as the sun disappeared, we reached the end of the plain. And Pehleo seemed just as far away.

Then I saw why I should not reach it for several hours. From the slopes behind I had looked down the plain at this small township to the distance and the view had suggested straight travel. Yet here, at the edge of the fields, I was faced with a fifteen hundred feet descent, to reach the level of the distant buildings.

Peons were passing us on the trail

"How far is Pchileo?"

"Just a little way"

Ninety minutes later, to another batch

"Are we near Pchileo?"

"Go ahead, *Señor*, it is just a little way "

And again

"Is this the way to Pchileo? Have we far to go?"

"Pchileo is there it is just a little way "

Then ten minutes later lights and a cobbled slope I thought of mirages in the desert Yet it was no vision We were there The sticky display of confectioners' stalls under yellow flares Half open drinking booths in similar light Police in colour-drawn material chatting outside these *tiendas*, and in one case leaning against the rump of a depressed pony for conversation with its sombrero-crowned owner I approached this apparently amiable guardian of the local peace and explained my wants A meal, a bath and bed I had an idea that one of my needs over represented the requirements of the peons, but they were at least to be found food and shelter

The uniformed Ecuadorian clicked his heels and said that it was possible He led me through the darkened streets with their unobtrusively illuminated corners Many of the houses were apparently of whitewashed mud Others were of cold stone Those in the semi dark sections of the town showed mostly bare exteriors, grilles and barricades Very occasionally did a balcony appear to overhang the cobbles

We crossed a square, entered a yard which enjoyed reflection of light from a window and open doorway It was beyond this doorway that I was able to acquire a meal of poached eggs on rice. But not exactly in privacy

The soldier-cum policeman or the policeman cum soldier successfully enlarged to the growing assembly a connected version of the few details with which I had explained my sudden appearance in Pchileo, the name of which town, incidentally, always seemed to me to be pronounced Pchiaro The two peons, who had come with me, supplemented with information of their own Soon there was very little room in which to eat so that I had to banish the major section of my gaping audience.

Could a horse be obtained for me in the morning, I asked through mouthfuls of rice. The chatter of the assembly squatting on other trestles and benches rose to a clamour. Through the doorway into the yard to where faces were pressed against the window, the thick voices echoed the word "*caballo*". My friend in the uniform issued an order for quiet, and this was echoed very much in the same way as it is from 'yes man' to 'yes man' in a movie studio.

Sí, Señor, a horse would be obtainable.

All right, then I must have it here at six. And now I should like to find a room—

Several streets from the "*café*" I reiterated my demands to the mother of a strong lunged offspring. Meanwhile a grandmother appraised my worth from the head of a short flight of stairs. She joined her daughter.

"And what will you charge for this room?" I asked, after further favourable conversation.

"Uh . . . one sucre fifty."

This represented the equivalent of ninepence.

The grandmother gave her daughter an obvious lick. But it was too late.

I did, however, pay them three sucre.

The sleeping bag unrolled from one corner of the bare room to the other. I climbed into it feeling better for the 'cat lick' wash that I had obtained with difficulty.

Staring at the high roof with my neck on the bundle of bunched up clothes, I wondered if Mont and Carl were still occupying the few square yards of tent area on which I had left them. Or had they reached the lake? It was difficult to imagine the unending rain of the Llagonatis after having travelled most of the afternoon through sunshine. The alleged "green hell" of the *Oriente* to come was said to be the result of frequent rain. But not rain that froze your backbone and prevented movement. It was warm down there. I thought of jungle steam and then dismissed the vision as being too 'Hollywood'. I should have to move quickly to catch Enc. First thing in the morning after

I LEFT ENGLAND

a bite I should grab a horse and head south west for Ambato
on the railway line Then for the Riobamba radio station

Indians, slush, Eric, Carl, Mont, Sonny, the *Oriente*, Rio-
bamba, Baños, the *batienda*, New York, gipsies with fiddles and
guitars at the porch, Eric, horses, peons, gold, Brooks, strange
mounds—Inca tombs? Valverde

Odd things flash their way quickly across a tired brain I
rubbed my forehead

"Placed in the town of Pchileo" had run the guide
So this was Pchileo

"Ask for the farm of Moya and sleep "

'Sleep Yes, that was it Moya and sleep No, just
sleep—

I did

CHAPTER XX

"ALREADY three days down Villaflo stop don't attempt join us yet "

This had been part of the radio'd reply from Eric. He added that the country appeared to be devoid of anything living, and went on to say that they were using rafts instead of canoes

Rafts That accounted for their quick getaway. One point stressed in Eric's condensed message was that he was passing through "foodless country"

There was little chance of catching rafts equipped with outboard motors already three days down a swiftly flowing river nearly a week away. But the thought of not accompanying the party into the *Oriente* weighed heavily on my spirits. It was certainly true that a scintillating vision of yellow, over everything Incan, had presented the idea of the Andes to me more attractively than the *Oriente*. Yet now the immense heated jungles of the Upper Amazon suggested more colour than the bleak snow swept ranges that I had left. I visualized tangled greenery sprayed lightly with warm rain through which 'tunnels' would have to be cleaved with *machetes* in the way that we had entered the 'Bella Vista—Camp Three' Valley. And I sat in Riobamba's offering of the first hot bath for over a month, and thought of all the rainbow plumage in the local Museum.

To have been so close to a tributary of the Amazon and not have seen it. The probability of this struck me more forcibly than it ever had before. But the 'horse' had already 'bolted'. I should have left the mountains earlier.

When Eric had radio'd "don't join us yet", what did he mean? He seemed to suggest that it would be possible later. I examined the Metropolitano wall map and it appeared to offer little solution to the problem of his movements. Even he had not been able to accurately label the exact patch of map in

habited by the *Ssabelas*, for only rumours and exaggerated stories had filtered through to the West

I toyed with the idea of taking a small expedition of peons to the *Oriente*, but dismissed it almost immediately as being too costly. There seemed to be only one course to take—a return to the mountains.

Yet the more I thought about it, the more I considered that it would serve no useful purpose. The two remaining 'get-rich quacks' in the *Llogenatus* had probably concluded their treasure hunt and, if they had not, there appeared to be little purpose in adding my posterior to their squatting contest.

There was, however, the question of the *Valverde* route. Were they anywhere near its correct landmarks? It has been my lot to possess a parent who perpetually denounces short-cuts to anything. Perhaps this brought home to me the fact that we had never begun the trek from *Pelileo*, neither had we ever asked for the "farm of *Moya*" nor "the mountain of *Guapa*", nor in any way followed the written guide systematically.

This was something that could be done and I decided to do it. But the slip between cup and lip crept in almost at once in the shape of dysentery. This cost me ten days.

On the morning of the eleventh, I sunned myself in a small garden patch in front of the *Metropolitano*, with glazed eyes turned across the wide station square to a small *burro* being driven up the cobbled main street. Apart from the disconsolate donkey, *Riobamba* appeared to have successfully discouraged its inhabitants from the bright rays of the day.

My right foot rested on the knee of the hotel *chico* who offered self respect to my *Llogenati* footwear for a few *centavos*. To the left the Andes giant, *Chimborazo*, sparkled its whiteness against the blue sky. To the right several sets of railway lines supported shunted goods wagons which rested their ends in *Riobamba*'s station.

Cobbles covered nearly half the station square. Bare earth constituted the rest. The stone building, bordering it to the left, was plain faced with high windows and narrow balconies. Two hundred yards across the square in that other plain

building, I had seen people "Holla" themselves into all colours of aggravation at the city switchboard, and violently turn handles

The same old Riobamba, but now, instead of the clatter of hammered crates and expeditionists getting in each other's hair, the hotel exuded an atmosphere of peace

Chico tapped my boot and beckoned for its partner. He was an odd fellow, ten years of age, and not over four feet in height, he seemed to be mostly of Indian blood, but no one knew much of his early history. He had just appeared one day with his polishing outfit and had dealt systematically with the feet of the hotel guests. After that he had been supplied with one of the semi uniform overshirts worn by the staff. He had personality and commercialized it to the envy of his elder colleagues.

"Are you *Loch*?"

The speaker, who approached from the doorway of the Metropolitano, was obviously a young Briton

"I have been reading of your uncle's expedition."

His name was Albert—David Albert. He had recently climbed Tunguragua, and at the conclusion of this conquest had found himself a victim of the dysentery snare. The Von Hartrots of the Villa Alemana enticed back his vim and vigour after a very sick period.

This offered as good a subject for conversation as if we had both enjoyed the same operation. We shook hands across my left leg to which the *chico* clung in case his work should be interrupted and the polishing liquids, or process, impaired.

Albert had an eye for every mountain within sight. He shook his head sorrowfully when I spoke of the legendary Hermoso. He did not know anyone who had reached it, though he had heard of it.

"Now there's something very special." He pointed to the twin peaked Altar. "What must that have looked like before it exploded?"

Then I remembered what I had been told. Altar had once—nobody knew exactly when—been twenty seven thousand feet high, roughly "two thousand" short of Everest.

We discussed how it might be climbed for he was anxious to make the ascent. It must have been at least twenty miles

away. Although snow-covered, the approaching ranges seemed to slope fairly gently some distance up each peak which rose from either end of the dormant volcano like candles on the altar of a church. Hence its name.

It looked 'easy'. But I am sure it was not, for successful Ecuadorian mountaineering leaves rumour in its wake, and local lore appeared to exclude Altar's peaks from the list of the conquered.

Whymper of the Matterhorn once climbed Chumborazo's twenty-one thousand feet. Albert spoke longingly of Cotopaxi, Cayambe, and Antisana, all over nineteen thousand, and appeared to be familiar with the first two. Certainly he had climbed Cotopaxi, and I gathered that he had reached one of its craters.

I asked him for helpful suggestions concerning the acquisition of a tent.

"Have you ever tried the Army?" he inquired, nodding towards a light grey Packard saloon, name plated with the word "Commando". It was used by a (then) Colonel Enriquez, who was shortly to become War Minister and subsequently assume the Presidency.

No, I had not. But I approached Colonel Enriquez at his military sanctum and was received with extreme courtesy, and the assurance of a tent. The Commandant was of medium height, wiry and clean-shaven as were most Ecuadorians. His whole manner spoke of vital efficiency and in appearance he offered a slight suggestion of the late Sir Phillip Sassoon. I should imagine that Inca blood represented part of his heritage.

Out at the Army barracks a soldier demonstrated the erection of a low two-man tent with cane supports. I signed a chit for it and drove back to the Metropolitano.

"*Señor*, the Post Office asks that you will call. A cable . . ."

The cable referred to certain money which had been transferred to a bank in New York on my behalf.

Money. I hadn't thought very much about it but, now that I did so, it became important. I had brought a limited amount with me and instead of carrying a letter of credit had arranged for a London bank to wire me money when the time came to

quit Ecuador. Envisioning travel in wild country, with Eric's full equipment and supplies, it had always seemed a secondary item. But by now I had sampled a taste of what the *gringo* was supposed to do and *pay* in 'civilized' Ecuador, despite the apparently favourable rate of exchange. And it cut a hole in the small change which I had with me. It was not the botels, they knew of the expedition and I could always get credit until more money came through. It was the incidentals, and supplies.

Yes, supplies. After my provision box had been fitted out for this new attempt on the Valverde route, the bill presented had been depressing, and the expense connected with entirely outfitting a regular expedition came to me with sledge-hammer suddenness. It was something I hadn't really appreciated before.

Such facts flitted across my mind as I stood on the top floor of the Post Office building pencilling a reply to the cable that I had received.

Then everything within my vision appeared to tilt and for a moment or two I 'shook'. I passed my hand across my forehead and rubbed my eyes. More of the dysentery bug? Fever? No, liver perhaps. Too much good food after bad—

I walked to a chair, but before I reached it the room began to sway. Was it *me* or the room? I looked at a clerk tapping a Morse key and at two others writing. No, it must be me.

But almost at once it became obvious that the whole building was swaying and shaking with a machine gun rumble somewhere below. The mud walls and mortar of the town had never unduly impressed me and I wondered how much of this they could stand. Yet these appeared to be a certain elasticity about them and the earth tremors had no effect.

The odd part about the whole quake was that the building, or at least the floor that I was on, swayed violently and yet the clerks merely stared blandly across the room. I wondered if they had many such tremors, as I thought of the geological history of the Andes. Later I read that on that very same day the earth had shaken in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Ohio, West Virginia, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois and Wisconsin, as well

as in Washington, D C, and the Provinces of New Brunswick, Ontario and Quebec. In what was apparently known as the Doucet region of Quebec, the tracks of the Canadian National Railway had twisted and a crack had appeared two hundred and fifty feet in length and forty deep. A woman was reported to have been scared to death at Watertown, N Y. It was said that in some States old houses were cracked, but there was alleged to be no general damage.

"Placed in the town of Pelileo."

Yes, here I was, on a horse—a bit bony perhaps but, with a leg at each corner, it looked functional—all set and ready to go.

"Ask for the farm of Moya."

Did anybody know Moya? *la hacienda* Moya? Nobody appeared to, although each questioned face bore the look of a cat that had slipped three mice down its gullet. They emanated a complete air of passive ignorance. Yet one of the bland faces, glanced at off guard, wore a smirk.

Well, I knew that my appearance was "vaudeville" and that the horse was also comic. But was it only these things? How many people before me had alpined up into a saddle between a rolled tent and a heavy duffle in Pelileo's town square and asked for Moya? I imagined very few during the life-time of these local yokels. Yet possibly every Indian knew the first landmarks of the guide by heart. Perhaps they didn't. Perhaps they weren't even smiling behind those serene faces. But usually peons were so voluntary with their suggestions. Well, I didn't care very much. It was late afternoon and I had arranged to leave Pelileo at this time of the day so that my movements might fit in with the schedule of the guide. I picked up the reins and signified my intended departure to the animal. There was no response.

Now horses and I usually get along well together, but this was like trying to encourage Gibraltar to move a few feet to the left or right. The reluctant nag was evidently a 'home-lover' for he stared towards the yard where he had just concluded a leisurely half hour.

I exercised all motions calculated to entice a horse into

action and nearly stripped my tongue making the usual "tchk-tchk" sounds to which co-operative horses react. But quiet resistance was apparently the theme of this animal's immediate policy. It gave an indigestive yawn and exhaled between its front legs.

The set expressions around me broke. There was much hilarity. It seemed that I had "hired a pup".

So this was what the peons had waited to see. Apparently the horse was well known. I made efforts to get another but the *cholo* horse-owners of Pelileo must have preferred this entertainment. They asserted that there were no others to be had.

Yet to my surprise, half an hour later, the animal was encouraged to cross the square and, after a short halt beside the Pelileo's centre of worship, the last cobble slipped behind the pony's heels and I climbed away from the town.

"Do you know Moya? Where is the *barriada* Moya?"
"There is a farm somewhere named Moya, do you know it?"

And always I received the same reply until two incredibly stupid peons with the usual yellow basin hats and faded *parches* hanging about their necks, at least gave me hope. Having questioned them more mechanically than intentionally, it shook me to hear a "Sí, señor," through my disgruntled yawn.

"You know Moya? Then how may I reach it? Where does it lie?"

"Over there."

"Where?"

"There." They waved towards the north-east.

"Oh! *Gracias*—"

The only habitation in the direction which they had suggested was an Indian shack a couple of miles away. I approached it. There appeared to be no one inside, but a distant loitering peon, with apparently no immediate occupation, looked as if he and the shack bore some relationship to each other.

"Is this Moya?"

He stared at me.

"Moya?" He mouthed the word very slowly, and then pointed dumbly up the mountain slope.

I rode on. But not easily. The pony from the start had considered the whole adventure a bad business. And if this species of quadruped could register expression with its features, then it wore a look of martyrdom and intense distaste.

Another peon. It was like finding crystal water in a desert, or money in an old coat pocket——

"Is Moya near here?"

He nodded. Ha, getting hotter, but by now I had reached the stage where I was a little tired of Moya.

"Is it that way, is it this way, is it here——where is it?" I accompanied each fevered query with much gesticulation.

"Here" He mumbled the word still staring vacantly

"Right here, on this very spot?"

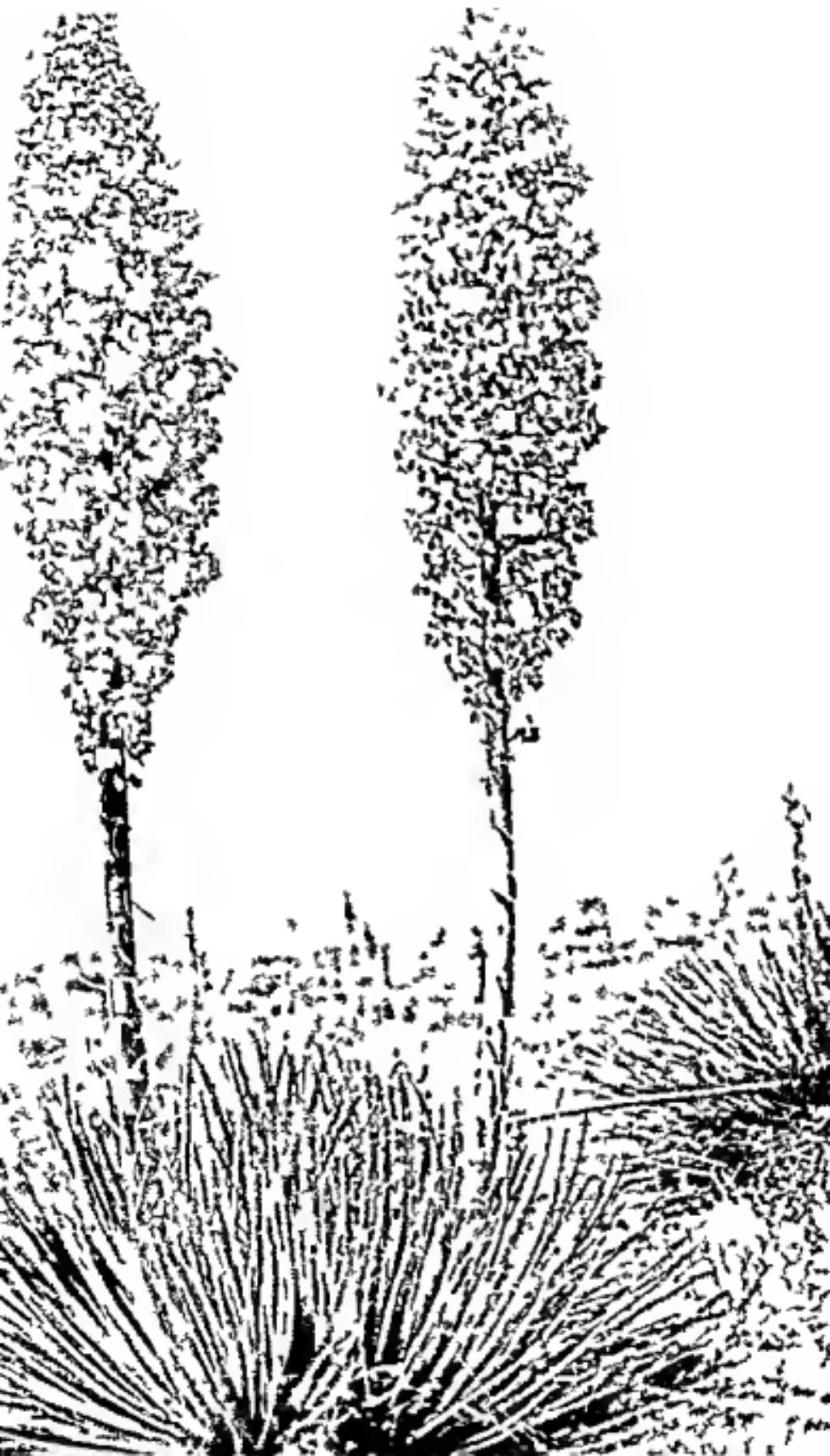
He nodded. It was an open part of the plain without much gradient, which once might have harboured a farm or—to give this last informant benefit of the doubt—possibly represented the former site of one, but it took a liberal peppering of imagination to convince myself of this.

What did it matter anyway, I argued, even if it wasn't the place I must have travelled in the right direction. It was now practically dark, and if I did camp a couple of miles either way, would it make all that difference? Would it? That was a question which I dismissed at once. But then again, I demanded of myself, was this being systematic? I looked at the darkness below me and the distant lights of Pelileo, and decided that I should have to conclude it as being so.

The armchair saddle with its bulky load of a tent and a heavy duffle slid quickly off the animal's back as I unstrapped the girth band. The pony shook itself and gave a rushing exhalation of relief. Meanwhile I untied and erected the tent as quickly as I could manage it, kicking myself for not having paid closer attention to the soldier's demonstration of its fool proof qualities, and for not having brought a flash lamp. It was now quite dark and cold.

Anchoring the pony to a long rope which I had brought for the purpose, I decided against lighting a fire and cooking a tin of Heinz beans. Instead I climbed under the rug and chewed chocolate that tasted like burnt cocoa. I made a mental note never to buy more of the same——

DESERT YUCCA, NEAR LOS ANGELES



Ask for Guapa tents pitched on rafts rain, rain
 we'll climb it together one day blood, yes dysentery
 to hell with you Carl, that wasn't your bullet top of
 the world, it's a hundred and two floors

This time I wasn't asleep I lay awake all night, or all the year it seemed, trying to keep warm. This was the result of trying to do without the sleeping bag. Good recommendation for its makers I made another mental note to acquaint them with the contrast of being without it at this altitude

But nothing could stop time moving on, and finally I gave up my mental muttering and came out of my open-eyed coma to find daylight and a cold wind sweeping the camp. Things assumed their correct perspective again. The pony was munching wet grass complacently I went to give him a morning pat and then stayed my hand in disgust. Disgust at myself—disgust at the people who had hired me the horse. That part of its backbone, usually covered by the saddle, pushed a blood matted spongey mess through the wretched animal's hide. With my weight and that of the saddle pressing on this horrible sore, the pony must have suffered excruciating agonies climbing the hills with me the evening before. No wonder it had been unco-operative.

This obviously was as far as the animal was going to travel. Perhaps I could return it to the lower slopes and find some peon to take it back. But what of the duffle? A peon could be found to carry that. Yet would he? I had forgotten the dread that all the peons felt towards the distant Llanganatis. He wouldn't come alone. Then I'd get a couple. Well then food—they would have to eat. If the length of stay in the mountains was to be indefinite, a large supply of their pinole flour must be obtained.

There seemed to be every obstacle. I had no wish to return to Pehleo. I had anticipated following the Valverde guide to my best ability, at the same time keeping a hawk eye on Cerro Hermoso which I expected to be within at least twenty miles of the latter part of the trail. And I should conclude my whole examination of Valverde's 'hypothesis' by joining up with Carl and Mont, if the rains had lessened.

But now, rather than waste time over peons in Pehleo, and

further supplies for them, I considered continuing the trek as I had started it . . . alone

The duffle resembled a torso bigger than my own, with all the boots and etceteras stuffed into it. Every time I looked at it, and at the mountains ahead, it sapped my strength. No, it was physically beyond me to crawl up the Andes with that on my back.

So that in any case I should have to return to Pichico, but there was nothing to stop me going as far as I could, armed with chocolate and the tent.

And leave the duffle to be plundered by peons——?

There were obstacles to every plan. If only I had lifted the saddle and examined the horse more thoroughly before leaving. If only I had arranged for peons and their extra food in Pichico. Or better still in Riobamba, where the dread of the mountains would probably be negligible. If——

There was nothing to stop me doing half a day's further trek along the trail followed by Valverde. The pony would be better off at this camp eating alone than in the hands of its owners. And the duffle and tent I would risk for that short time.

I staked the pony's rope on the other side of the tent so that it could munch another wide circle of grass, and, with the remaining half packet of 'burnt-cocoa' chocolate, I climbed the hill above to look for 'the mountain of Guapa', the next landmark of the guide.

There were several suspects in sight. It kept hammering at my brain that it would be ridiculous to have set out to be systematic and not hold to that idea. I looked down the slopes beyond the camp and in the distance saw a stray peon. Yes, it was worth the trip down again and in a few minutes I had passed my mountain headquarters with the pony sentinel eating cheerfully, and eventually collared the man.

"Guapa . . . *la cerra de Guapa?*" I demanded. But he only leered with a thick thread of saliva bridging his lips and evidently thought me droll. One of his mates, however, was more helpful. The fellow had appeared from a nearby hill.

"That is Guapa." He pointed to a mountain almost to the south-east.

I disputed that if anywhere it must be north-east, but his

attitude was 'take it or leave it', and he would not accompany me

So I had *passed* Guapa? If the truth were known I had probably passed Moya also, on my way from Pehleo

I walked to Guapa. The sun had risen to a respectable angle when I reached it. Now what?

"Look to the East so that thy back be towards the town of Ambato."

Yes, I could see Ambato from where I stood—beyond Pehleo. I placed my back towards it and seemed to be looking north-east.

"From thence thou shalt perceive the three peaks of Llanganatis in the form of a triangle."

But I couldn't. Bad weather overhung the mountains ahead of me. The next stipulation in the guide was that the hopeful treasure hunter should look for a "forest and a clump of trees which are called the arrows."

I looked at all the scrub land and small bush and "perceived" such landmarks in half a dozen places. Then I looked again at the bad weather overhanging the Llanganatis. If I did find another really strong horse and one or two husky peons in Pehleo to continue with my 'system', could I dodge that weather in any part of those ranges? Were Carl and Mont still sitting in that rain soaked tent where I had left them? It was said that the warm rain of the *Oriente* hardly *discouraged* movement, and Eric had intimated that it would be possible to join his party later—

Since his 'radio' already a fortnight had passed. If I was going to exhaust what few funds I had in hand on organizing a trek somewhere, it might just as well be to the *Oriente* which I hadn't seen. My mind reached for something which it usually prefers to avoid. A quick decision. The Western Brothers could have categorized me at once.

I gave up the Valverde trail.

CHAPTER XXI

AT half past five in the morning the streets looked cold. The car was cold too, but it was comfortable and it amused me to realize that in little over an hour I should literally step from this last contact with easy existence, to the back of a mule.

In no time at all it seemed that all signs of Quito were obscured by the dust from the rear wheels of this salooo as we sped down into a quiet valley with ferns, a running stream and tall trees. At last I was on my way to join Eric's party, and the feeling of relaxed peace of mind came to me strangely after all the effort, disappointment and worry that had preceded this departure.

As the road through this cave of fernery became rocky, and twisted more than ever, I thought of my very secondary attempt to track down the preliminary landmarks of the Valverde route. It was still most difficult not to feel attracted to its legendary quest, but at least I was on the way to something that I knew was definitely there. The *Oriente* Eric had spoken of penetrating the Llanganatis at the conclusion of his work on the Amazon tributaries, depending on my report of our primary survey. This meant that it was practically definite that he would finally attempt the Valverde route and attempt it properly. Eric usually consummated his ideas.

My mind flitted back to the tedious return trek from the "mountain of Guapa" to Pchileo, leading the raw backed horse. I thought of the smirks of the local inhabitants at my reappearance two days after having farewelled them. I could see the little Ecuadorian tailor, who had hired the horse for me, upbraiding the aged owner and his wife in 'machine-gun' Spanish.

And now as I bumped away from Quito, my thoughts returned to the time when I had hurtled from boulder to boulder down that 'Pchileo Ambato' road. Hewn from a cliff

of sheer rock along both sides of a deep valley, its unbordered curves had swept me with more than my share of fatalism. My liver had received its great awakening as that ancient "flivver" steering made frequent contact with the projecting corners

It had been an alarming ride. My vision had invariably refocussed just as the car had bounced to the edge of some disconcerting chasm, or had hung over another death trap brink. Judging from the burned-out wrecks far below, other cars had passed this way.

Anyone who has traversed that 'Pecileo Ambato' road will testify to its exciting possibilities. And with THAT DRIVER, they could go home and write about it——

THAT DRIVER! Bare footed, thick lipped, unhatted, he could hardly reach those metal projections and that piece of wire, all of which collectively constituted the controls. When we had scattered our second set of peons and practically pinned a couple of *barros* against the rock face, THAT DRIVER really went to town.

It had seemed that the vehicle lacked any effective mechanism with which its progress might have been allayed. And he revelled in it——

Switching to neutral as we approached yet another 'hair-raiser' he would drive like a fire-chief to that right angled bend, with one casual finger on the wheel.

This had been too much. And with the bumping, thumping, and heaving, it had been like riding in a runaway tank.

Then had come a vision flavouring of Detroit and I had offered up postponed supplication.

Yet the two cars had somehow failed to meet head on. They had merely stripped each other's wings and bounded away in a mess of tangled metal.

But in time we had managed to reach Ambato and after a meal and a bath at the pleasant German guest house Villa Hilda, I had taken the train to Quito.

How ruggedly desolate the country had seemed after leaving Ambato. That little cobbled town, scene of one of the greatest Incan Civil wars, was an odd mixture of antiquity and civilization.

They had 'talkies' there. In a packed rustic hall, I had seen

Anna Neagle in one of her earlier pictures. During the more emotional scenes superfluous sound effects had been provided by whooping peons. There had been much commotion but apparently no 'chucker-out'.

In Ambato I had been led with pride to the mausoleum of Ecuador's most brilliant nineteenth century writer, Juan Montalvo, famous for his attacks on the tyrannous principles of Garcia Moreno, gargoyle in the political affairs of Montalvo's day. The shrine had been impressive—

There is more in Ambato than appears to a stranger merely wandering about the streets. Having achieved the friendship and hospitality of its citizens you are liable to be led to amazing modern homes hidden away behind unpretentious shop-fronts. Of course Ambato has its "modern residential section" to the north of the town, and of this the Villa Hilda had been part.

The Quito train had climbed out of the station yards into a barren, dry, and volcanic country. It was a ravaged brown, and I had considered that the great white Cotapaxi, climbed by my recent acquaintance Albert, had probably been responsible. A lonely lake had lain amidst this desolation, and I had mentally shivered as I had looked at its surroundings. Could civilization ever claim that territory?

The Guayaquil Quito Railway carries American "Supervisors". I had found one aboard who had accompanied us from Guayaquil to Riobamba. He had asked me how the expedition was getting along.

I had told him that a 'section' were plotting what they could see of the Llanganatis through the rain and snowstorms, and that the main party was mapping the *Oriente*. I had added that it was my intention to join them as soon as possible.

"Funny country, in there," he had said. "One of my mates who used to work on this railroad—Sam Souder—took his pension and went in. Then there was an Australian—Kangaroo Brown—he went in too. They stay there. Some of them go native . . ."

At lunch time we had reached Latacunga and once again I had been reminded of Valverde and the Incan treasure. In the archives of this town his "guide" had been preserved for years,

until it had been stolen. Latacunga was the usual type of small Ecuadorian town. The streets were both dusty and cobbled like the main square. The semblance of a fine building apparently semi-completed had lent a definite air of self respect to its surroundings.

"Washed" mud-walled houses lined the streets. There had been a very small Hotel Londres which had appeared to give good meals. I had never discovered whether the proprietor had any identification with London. The big full blown Metropolitano Hotels of Ecuador had carried a Union Jack on their menus because their originator was from Gibraltar—

After Latacunga we had appeared to travel between dormant volcanoes. The train had again climbed and it had become colder and colder.

Then we had finally descended into warm green fields and passed between eucalyptus trees and the farms of Machachi.

Where had I heard that name before? Oh, I remembered. I had seen it on the mineral water bottles. So there, also, were famous springs.

Once again the half breed *cholas* had clamoured around the steaming train and wheedled passengers to buy oranges, pineapples, bread rolls, biscuits, meat, and those strange baked animals which had carried too close a resemblance to large rats.

The American "Supervisor" had finally elucidated: "*Coyotes* . . . they are guinea pigs."

Yet the ingrained idea that they were some species of rat had refused to fade and I had preferred to postpone further feasting. But still these thick shrted, felt-hatted women had begged and coaxed at the carriage window. Behind each one half a dozen baskets with saleable contents, mostly fruit, had lain in the dust and an occasional Indian dog had slunk around sniffing.

One misguided Indian woman, whom I had not seen make a sale, had concentrated on my window with the hope of encouraging a few *centavos* (sixteen to a penny) from the "rich gringo". Yet recollection of the remaining small change in my money belt had made me smile ironically. Like Billy Bunter I had been awaiting that bank draft.

You approach Quito over flattish country, occasionally sighting well built residences suggesting the large town that is ahead. The fields for a time are rather like many in France. Finally the train slows down and curves round a bend into the Quito railway yards, and you realize that the town is mostly above you. Solid and substantial buildings stand side by side to the usual type with mud walls.

Presenting myself with the choice of either the Savoy or Metropolitano, I had decided to live at the first and eat at the second. The idea was not mine but I had tried it, subsequently concluding that I preferred it the other way.

Quito is said to be built in the basin of a valley but its streets run mostly up and down hills.

In 1932 the population of the town was estimated at one hundred and four thousand, as against Guayaquil's hundred and twenty thousand.

Antonio Pons—set up as Provisional President by the Ecuadorian Army during the August 21st revolution (which had greeted my arrival in the country)—had been in residence when I had reached Quito.

His imposing white palace faced the Plaza de la Independencia—

To approach it, through the Plaza, one passed by ornate iron gateways into a square of splendidly kept lawns and shrubbery with occasional tall palm trees rising nearly to the height of the Independence Monument at the hub of all these sunlit pathways.

Every species of Indian—some with “ten gallon” straw hats—and occasional veiled figures in black, had moved slowly around the gardens. Figures had relaxed into sleep on the warm benches.

Most of the less dormant *habitats* of this sun haven had gazed frequently towards the palace. Perhaps they were mentally toying with incidents of Ecuador's stormy political past. Perhaps their minds had been a blank. Who could analyse the thoughts of those glazed eyed loafers in the Plaza de la Independencia?

Independence. Ecuador's independence dates from the Battle of Pichincha, May 29th, 1822, and it has been hardly the

quietest Latin American republic. Furthermore it is estimated that three fourths of its population are Indians, one fifth mixed and only a small fraction white. Education is not as far-reaching as it might be. Only adults who can read and write can vote.

Ecuador returned to a constitutional form of government on September 10th, 1928, when a National Assembly of fifty-four members, elected by the people in August began its session. The Assembly by unanimous vote continued President Ayora in Office, and on March 27th, 1929, elected him Constitutional President (without right of re-election) for five years. He assumed office on April 12th. The new constitution was proclaimed on March 29th and on May 7th the Assembly established a cabinet of six ministers appointed by the President. The Minister of the Interior succeeds to the Presidency if a vacancy occurs. The Senate of thirty two members is elected by social groups for four years, the Chamber of Deputies thirty six members are elected for two years by popular vote of the provinces.

On February 6th, 1934, President Roosevelt accepted the invitation to act as arbitrator with negotiating commissions to be sent to Washington in order to effect a settlement of the century-old boundary dispute concerning ownership of the vast territory on the Upper Amazon lying between the Motona, Marañon, Napo and Pilcomayo Rivers. The two commissions incidentally have not yet reached complete accord.

Ecuador, though rated as an original member of the League of Nations, did not qualify until September 28th, 1934 when she informed the Council by cablegram that she had ratified the covenant and desired to join the League.

The country issued a decree on September 24th, 1927, for bidding the entry into the country of all foreign clergymen, irrespective of religious faith.

An eight hour labour law and one concerning model child labour were put into effect on January 1st, 1929.

By invitation of the Government, Professor Edwin W. Kemmerer of Princeton University, with a staff of American experts went, in October, 1926, to Ecuador, and after four

months' study presented plans for the reorganizing of the finances of the country. As a result the Banco Central was opened on June 1st, 1927, with a capital of ten million sures (just under a million dollars) to which was given the exclusive privilege of issuing banknotes for fifty years. The bank on June 30th, 1934, had a note circulation of forty million one hundred thousand sures, with a gold cover of seventeen million three hundred thousand, and foreign assets of ten million six hundred thousand sures, a cover of 67 3 per cent, the legal reserve being 32 83 per cent.

A budget law, new taxation, and revised customs duties were amongst the twenty five reforms recommended and adopted. About thirty million dollars of American capital had been invested in the country. The sucre originally at 48 6 American cents, had fallen in value to less than half, in February, 1927, it was stabilized at twenty cents gold. It was maintained in 1935 at 10 50 sures to the dollar.

The actual budget for 1933 was balanced at nearly forty two million sures, that for 1934 at nearly forty nine million, and for 1935 at something over fifty million sures.

On February 9th, 1932, Ecuador abandoned the gold standard, and this suspension was ultimately extended.

Although I had found all these facts accessible, no one could convey to me the exact age of Quito. Its antiquity confounded the Spanish chroniclers four hundred years ago. For Quito was in the possession of a lost race—the Caras—before the Incas conquered it.

One has only to mount a side of Quito's Andean basin to appreciate the attraction of its position at the hub of so much fertility.

Tribes must have fought with all they had for existence in this near Utopia, since the earliest existence of man in South America. For every day in Quito the sun shines, and its height of roughly ten thousand feet above the sea "softens" its climate, despite the fact that the equator "crosses" the country only a few miles to the north. In Quito it seems never too hot, never too cold. One's sense of well being and friendship towards one's neighbour in the ideal climate of this town is so definite, that frequently I would wonder at the fact that war,

bloodshed and revolutions had taken place amongst these quiet cobbled streets where I walked

As I have already intimated one seemed to either climb or descend in Quito. Above the narrow pavements, tall windows opened on to *petite* though finely architectured balconies. The houses were occasionally to be found in faded pinks or blues, but mostly they were 'white', their roof tops forming steps where the houses occupied levels below or above one another on Quito's inclines. Grilles covered most of the lower windows, but the doorways surprised me. They were usually so high. Bucket shops and every possible form of business occupied the ground floors. There seemed to be no definite slum quarter. The poor appeared to live beside or beneath those citizens more comfortably provided for.

Quito has of course its residential section on the outskirts of the town. The trams—yes, Quito has them—run out there. And in a country where one has the impression of so much poverty, it amazed me to see so many luxurious limousines and dwelling places amongst the fine avenues of this area. It had seemed that practically every country in the world had its representative here and that each and every one of them had built in their own individual style. If you can mentally take a yellow schloss, something in modernistic Moorish, and an architectural fantasy with minarets in faded blue, you might manage to create a fair idea of the unorthodox yet somehow attractive scenes that represent Quito's "better quarter".

The Savoy and Metropolitano had both been within easy walking distance of the Plaza de la Independencia but the Metropolitano was obviously the social, and apparently the political, rendezvous.

Every "train day" (that is to say when the trains arrived from the coast) most excellent "sea food" dishes would be prepared in the cocktail bar of the Metropolitano. Prawns and crab in spiced tomato juice, oysters, and other knick knacks filled the bar in the evening and about eleven a.m. the following day. It was on Sunday mornings, that the concoctor of these palatable dishes had really excelled himself. In the afternoons the cocktail room had been crowded for "tea". Yes, 'English' tea and toast, and amongst many it had appeared to be a ritual.

"Ecuador for its ice-cream"

Highly-coloured giant sized ice-creams done in that special way that the country has

So that with a "sweet tooth" such as my own, it was inevitable that I should have been found in the Metropolitano, at four o'clock every afternoon

The reason for the delay of my trek to the *Oriente* had been simple though important. I had learnt sufficient of the proposed venture to know that it was to cost me more hard cash than I had in hand. And I had been faced with the necessity of provisioning for this trip which perhaps would enable me to strike Eric in the approved 'Stanley-Livingstone' manner—or perhaps not.

On this vague journey into jungle country (where Gonzalo Pizarro in 1541 had led 300 soldiers, 4,000 Indians and about 3,000 head of live stock, to ultimately return with only a few Spanish survivors and clothing in shreds) I had intended to take enough food to keep me going, if the necessity arose, for some months. And oatmeal had seemed to provide the solution. Gonzalo Pizarro described his movements in the *Oriente* as being "with much labour and hunger". I intended to eschew any semblance of the latter. But then such intentions arrive easily—

Through the medium of Mr Juan Clark of the American Mission I had discovered that I should be able to "mule it" part of the way over the Andes. My first aim was to reach the Upper Amazon tributary known as the Rio Napo. According to Eric's latest radio reports, he and his party were now well down a more southern tributary, the Curaray, which apparently joined the Napo in Peru. They were already well over two hundred miles from the Andean edge of the *Oriente* and at least three hundred miles from Quito.

It seemed that Eric's idea was to cross from the Curaray to the Napo at a point where it was reckoned that they were "nearest" to one another. Then, if I reached the Napo and travelled down it, I should meet him. I hoped. It had appeared to be a long shot but was worth trying. Eric intended to travel ahead of the others for a short distance *without* wireless equipment after leaving the Curaray, so that it had

not been much use waiting for radio reports that he had reached the Napo

As the days had worn on and a very necessary medium to the journey refused to show up, I had begun to haunt the Banco Central constantly asking the same question, always receiving the same reply

"No, it has not arrived yet, *señor*"

This had been beyond me, for it had all been arranged before I left England

Selling my revolver, I had wired again with the proceeds and had waited resignedly. Even the hotel *criados* had seemed to sense that I was temporarily not in a position to "tip." They had become cheeky and disinclined to give service. In Ecuador the dollar is a magic carpet but without that carpet you fall and the bump is hard. I had certainly wished Eric would turn up with his treasury. But then, I had reflected, his *Oriente* trip would be over and there would be little point to my trek.

Whilst waiting for my monetary lifebuoy, I had again met David Albert. After a few preliminary words of greeting he had flushed and said halungly "I'm in a rotten position—stuck—stoney—could you lend me a few dollars to wire New York—"

I had laughed and told him how I, too, was waiting patiently for something to appear at the bank. But I had an idea. The Riobamba "station" had frequently radio'd New York for the expedition. So telling Albert that somehow I should get his message through I had him write it out on a telegraph form. Then borrowing his remaining *centavos*, I had wired it to Riobamba, adding what I considered to be sufficient explanation to the radio 'owner-operator'

The privacy obtainable with cables is naturally not always possible with radio. Despite the fact that the transmission had been directed to another American station, somehow our expedition headquarters in New York had tuned in on it also.

Albert's message had discussed a certain agreement with the addressee, but the Riobamba station, misunderstanding, had attached my signature to the radio.

Months later when I returned to New York, I was greeted

with a stupid denunciation concerning an alleged secretive agreement between myself and the person to whom Albert had radio'd. It seemed that I was some sort of expedition spy. I told Albert of this when I eventually met him in London.

"And unfortunately that radio didn't help me," he said. "The person to whom I sent the message had left the States—"

One day I had had an offer of a drive to Ibarra, Ecuador's most northerly town. The road hewn roughly from the hills had wound round cliffs and here again were visions of burned-out flurries at the bottom of ravines. To me, the factor of safety along this road was less than on others. We had stopped at Otavalo, a small 'partly-cobbled' town where the Indians were said to be "of a fine type" and the "purest descendants of the Incas." Their noses had been slightly more aquiline and their features as a whole consequently sharper. But if I had not been told to watch for these points I should not have noticed them. These people had worn the usual 'yellow basin' hats, the inevitable faded *parches* and had been invariably barefooted.

We had crossed the Equator at the bottom of a gorge so deep that the old car had difficulty in climbing the other side. No notice had marked this "menagerie lion" as I had heard it once called.

Passing snow-capped Cayambe, of 19,534 feet, we had subsequently reached Ibarra, which exuded what I thought was a melancholy atmosphere, despite a surprisingly colourful set of gardens with every national piece of shrubbery represented.

Ibarra possessed large barracks. Could it have been in case Colombia ever looks to the South? The claims of Colombia and Ecuador were said to conflict.

The town had looked like one which had flourished for a week and was now resting. No doubt it would again have its day. Ecuador had a definite future despite the fact that it was inclined to carry you back into the centuries.

Returning to Quito, I had met Albert again and we had held a conference over the finance question, and had even reached the stage where we had placed our valuables on a table and, with serious faces, had weighed out principles. But neither of

us had known the Spanish for "hock shop" so that we had decided to wait and hope.

Next day when I had walked up the corner steps of the magnificent Banco Central, I had been overcome with surprise. The money had arrived. And as I had arranged, an equal amount had also been placed in the Guayaquil bank.

Despite the fact that Eric had a great deal of film equipment with him in the *Oriente*, I had wanted to record my trek from Quito. So that I had approached a camera shop in Quito's "arcade" and had inquired for prices. One sixteen millimetre "Ensign" had appeared to be going very cheaply and I had bought it. But a few minutes later a representative of the shop had come bowing and scraping to say that there had been some mistake. The camera's price was many times the amount that I had been charged.

This had seemed possible but I could not afford to buy it at its new price.

But since the establishment had put me to "great inconvenience", the representative had pressed, would I not borrow the camera to take a few shots of Quito?

No, I had told him, I would hire it for a day if they cared to let me have it. Would they?

No. They wouldn't hire it, but they would be pleased for me to use it.

I had no wish for such a concession and had again pressed them to hire it to me. Then when the firm had refused I had stupidly given way and accepted it "on loan", signing a slip to say that it was temporarily in my possession.

Having 'taken' a few local 'shots', I returned it to them almost at once. With my thoughts more on the *Oriente* trip than on the camera, I had omitted to ask for a receipt.

The long and short of this business had been that, unknown to me, one of the salesmen had stolen the 16 M.M. "Ensign" and, when questioned by his company, had produced the original slip that I had signed and alleged that I was still "in possession".

Months afterwards, when I had left Ecuador, this shop presented Eric with a bill for the camera and created a lot of trouble, attempting to damn the expedition as "sharks".

Fortunately Albert had been with me on the occasions when I was lent and had returned the "Ensign", and was able to straighten everything out.

Whilst I had been arranging my trip, the hotel manager had asked whether I had ever seen a bull fight. He had said that there was one on that afternoon, a really funny one, he was sure that I should enjoy it. I had asked Albert to come along. But his 'bull fighting' appetite had been sated in Spain, and he disliked seeing blood splashing an arena.

I had told him that this would not be possible at this comic show which we were to see. The manager had said that everyone went for a laugh and that there were to be clowns.

Usually I regard clowns, well meaning as they might be, with the same feeling that I regard village bazaars. But it had seemed to suggest a diversion and we had both gone.

Yes, there were the clowns. One had pretended to shave the other, complete with apron, lather brush, chair, and magazine. And then the bull had been encouraged into the ring—

Its horns had been cut, but it had bounded aggressively across the arena having summed up the situation in no time at all.

But I had not noticed (perhaps because I had not looked for it) until the end of the afternoon that as each bull came snorting through the "gate", a small dart had been plunged into its back just to allay any bovine reverie.

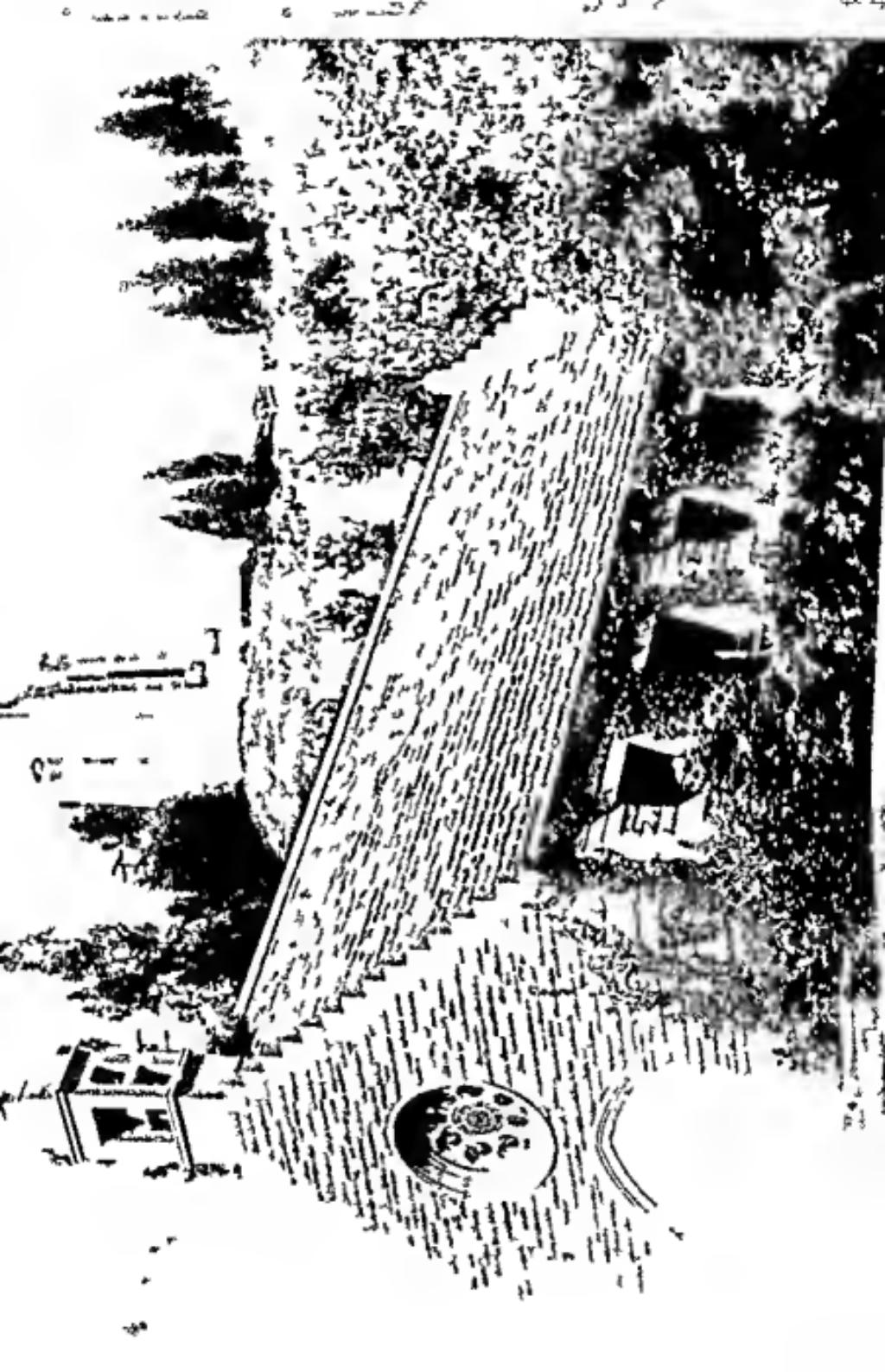
In a moment both barber and victim were in the air. How they had managed to avoid injury, whilst being tossed in this manner, was beyond my reasoning.

The two clowns had then knelt down with their hind quarters towards the bull and their foreheads to the ground, meanwhile signalling the animal with their hands. The animal had been a little perplexed at the apple being put on the table so readily, but soon it had taken the obvious course and had charged them. I had expected a couple of broken necks but apart from being bowled through the dust, the clowns had seemed "whole".

Then there had been a momentary interval whilst bars with wooden handles, bound with coloured streamers, had been handed to the two men in the ring.

A LOS ANGELES SUBURBAN CHURCH IN PEACEFUL SETTINGS

V.



Surely, I had thought, they weren't going to "prick" the animal with these things——

But they were. And every time a clown had managed to plunge a barb into the shoulder of this dismayed animal, blood had squirted, the crowd had cheered and roared with hilarity and the bull had frothed at the mouth looking more wretched every minute

Eight *banderillas* had eventually hung from its shoulders. Again there had been a short interval during which the animal had alternatively stood and run about the ring, attempting to rid itself of these be-ribboned torture sticks, each one about three feet in length

What was to happen then? I had supposed, perhaps stupidly, that someone would come and take the barbs from the animal. But, instead, a matador had appeared with a pink *capa* and sword and had proceeded to bow to each section of the audience

There had been many sections. And the bull had taken no notice, being too concerned with its own discomfiture

The matador had strutted up to the animal, which had stood perfectly still. Then he had bounded around it, always drawing his heels together in military fashion after every leap. The bull had refused to respond.

This had gradually become too much for the matador. He had been encouraging the animal for several minutes and had no intention of appearing ridiculous. He had given the animal a poke with his sword. It had looked blearily in his direction and had stepped towards him. The matador had leapt and bounced like an acrobat, eventually returning to his former posture.

He had played the bull in this fashion for five minutes, first prodding it and then skipping away if it as much as looked at him. This part of the performance had been tagged as part of the clowning, by the audience about me. But if the matador had originally considered introducing humorous touches to his act his mind was obviously now on another track.

An extra step in the direction of this agile figure had proved the bull's undoing and the sword had been run messily through its shoulder.

It had swayed drunkenly about to the accompaniment of wild shrieks from the audience who had obviously been delighted. It had given a shake and a heave and had managed somehow to throw the sword into the air. A shower of blood had followed—

The matador had retrieved his sword and, after a few more capers, had plunged the blade again into the shoulder, to the hilt. This time the animal had been too weak to do anything about it and instead had veered drunkenly around the ring. With screams of amusement Indians had begun to drop into the arena from behind the barriers and had rushed to pull its tail. Feebly it had tried to shake them off but had been unable to do so and they had only pulled harder. Then when it had collapsed slowly to the ground, they had jumped onto its back, made suggestive and coarse gestures, whilst a crowd had attempted to pull it around through the dust, again by its tail.

Then somebody had appeared with a small chisel like instrument and this had been plunged between its ears. They didn't kill it immediately. They had had to continue hammering the instrument in.

Finally the brute had died, horses had come to drag it away, the matador had bowed again to every section, hats had been thrown into the ring and the first of six bulls, which were all despatched in the same way, had been hauled out at a canter, through the dust.

I had left thinking of the Spanish Inquisition, and reflecting on the fate of the Incas that had been Conquest prisoners. It had been odd to realize that such hospitable people as poured from the Plaza Del Toros could be so barbaric.

Another regular Quito social event is the first night of any new film. The town's elite pay so many *centavos* more and look smugly down upon the lesser audience from more sumptuous positions raised a foot above the stalls at their side.

Here you see splendid uniforms, much cosmetic beauty, and evidence of heavy sales in peroxide. Or can someone convince me that this section of South America does breed a department of natural blondes?

But instead of going to a film I had accompanied Albert to Quito's famous old theatre, El Teatro Sucre, to see a visiting musical show. The Spanish danseuse had thumped rather heavily about the stage but in all the show had been colourfully costumed and good.

In the middle of it I had noticed two elderly ladies in the adjoining box attempting to catch my eye, and I had recognized them as the two "Whoopie Queens", who had so hospitably produced *aguadiente* for Sonny and myself, after our hot ride to Baños.

Spanish actors and especially comedians are most expressive and though I could follow only a few actual words of this rapid-fire humour on the stage, it had given me one long laugh. The Teatro Sucre, which must have been originally built as an opera house, had put on a splendid entertainment.

I thought of all these things as I bumped and jolted away from Quito to my rendezvous with the *Oriente* bound mule. It had been quite the most colourful town that I had seen.

But I came out of my reverie now for the sun had reached a respectable angle and the car was in open country climbing higher and higher.

Then, as I began to slip back to further reflections on Quito, we stopped beside a straw-thatched hut in the middle of a bare windy *paramo* on the shoulder of the range.

Fifty yards further on the motor track came to a dead end.

So this was where I was to leave the great civilization behind me.

But the mule had not arrived——

I paid the car driver; he dumped out my duffle, and I followed the Indian who carried it into the hut.

CHAPTER XXII

THE thatched hut was unlike any others that I had been in and its walls appeared to be also of 'thatching' instead of the usual stones cemented together with mud. It was one of three or four and I killed time waiting for that mule by carrying out a half hourly parade of inspection from door to door. Or should I say that the inhabitants conducted this "tour"? For they would all (though there were few to each hut) pour out into the chilly air and grin knowingly at each other, always managing to edge behind me and pass unintelligible remarks in their own peculiar slang. Perhaps it was *Quichua*. I don't remember any of it, but I doubt if this *Oriental* language extended so far west.

As is usual around native huts, dogs slunk about with their tails and ears down and always gave the impression that they were ready to avoid a kick or a thrown piece of wood. Probably because of the cold, chickens shared the shelters of these Indians and their dogs. Despite this fact, their owners had made praiseworthy attempts to remind visitors of their link with civilization. Kerosene boxes stood on end in the corners, with mats or pieces of white cloth as mantles and in one case a magazine picture of some wild eyed *señorita* was pasted into a rough frame. Usually there was a figure or coloured illustration of the Virgin Mary, and one fortunate habitat actually flaunted a chest of drawers and an iron bedstead. This evidence of semi-organized living did not exactly glisten from beneath coats of fresh white paint, but as I have frequently suggested, the Indians have an eye for colour, even though their 'efforts' do achieve a certain drabness in a very short time.

Their vision appeared to faithfully observe only the "city" furnishings of their one roomed homes and eschewed all temptation to recognize the carelessness of the unfettered

chickens which did little to introduce hygienic standards to those earthen floors. Here and there, outside the buts, pottery and gourds would be done up in bundles—I never discovered why, but there they were—and an occasional large earthenware water jar, such as might have hidden Ali Baba, lay on its side or against a wall.

Then there was a lot of chattering and I discovered that my precious mule had arrived. "Precious" because I was later to appreciate how near to hell parts of the trail could be without a mule.

Actually there were two of them, one was to carry my duffle, provisions and, in his more weary moments, the muleteer. The other visibly sank into the ground and dropped several inches in height when I climbed aboard. I felt like getting off again but on looking around and seeing no others on any section of my horizon, I hesitated, realizing how long I had been waiting for these specimens. The muleteer seeing my indecision disclaimed any idea that the animals were being subjected to anything out of the ordinary. So I erased my humanitarian instincts and insensitively encouraged the mule to proceed, and surprisingly enough it did.

From this point it was all a climb. Up and up we went following a clearly marked trail into the regions that were becoming more bare and more windswept, until I ruminated as to how much of myself the warmer *Oriente* would manage to thaw.

Towards midday we passed over one range just below the snow line and as we descended subsequently into a long valley and eventually past a small lake it began to rain. Rain is rain the world over, sometimes more violent in one place than in another but our trek through it is hardly worth recording except that the mule flicked its ears in disgust and instead of sitting down began to run. It was not a lope, or a trot. "Running" is the only way its movement could be described. Frequently we came to small bridges across streams. Many times I had to dismount and follow the animals with the muleteer just in front of me shouting "*Mula, taramba,*" every yard or so. To pick one's way over many of those big flakes of fallen rock and also across the boulders themselves demanded

accurate stepping on the part of the mules, but only the stones slipped, and the animals would reach the top of these climbs and wait for us. On many occasions we were confronted with the necessity of zig zagging down muddy hillsides, and here again these live toboggans managed to keep to the 'run'. Certainly mules have something which horses lack and I say it having experienced ownership of seventeen horses.

The path which we followed was known as the "Popiacti Trail" and in the late afternoon a village of several huts which I was told bore the name of Popiacti came into view. These were the first *Oriente* buildings that I had seen. Of course they could not strictly be given that label because they really only possessed a flavouring of what I would term *Oriente* but their roofs ran from a considerable height above the ground to within a few feet of it. The vegetation round about was very green, and perhaps in comparison to the chilly plains, that I had crossed higher up, the atmosphere seemed warm, but not steaming. Green leaves and liana, branches and a great deal of torn vine lay on the trail which was becoming very muddy. Probably there had been a heavier storm there during the afternoon than the one that the muleteer and I had experienced.

On three occasions this man had to hack with his *machete* at a fallen tree across the path, for in so many places the tangle of greenery on either side of us grew to the very edge of this 'foot trail' which must often have not been more than six inches across. Once a mule—the one with the pack—tried to step with its front feet up onto a fallen tree. But the wood was green and wet and the animal's feet slipped over it, giving the unfortunate quadruped a surprising jolt in the stomach and leaving it suspended with all four feet off the ground. At times I rode ahead of the pack mule and kept up a jog for a mile at a time. I was unconcernedly convinced that the trail which I followed was the right one but frequently I would find myself at a dead end on a river bank, over which I would lose several 'foot pounds' of energy encouraging the animal across. Then having arrived at the other side after an impromptu bathe, I would find myself confronted with plain unadulterated jungle and no trail.

So back I would coax the mule again to its very obvious disgust and, returning half a mile along the trail, I would come upon a barely tolerant muleteer, whose eyes blazed the word "tenderfoot", and who had always appeared to know where I had turned from the 'beaten route'.

These regular additions to the normal journey did not cure me of travelling on ahead. I could usually stand half a day "plodding along" on the back of a mule, but after that, for the sake of diversion, and to exercise cramped knees, a faster motion was always tempting.

By nightfall we came to a solitary hut with this new species of high roof. There were one or two Indians inside it with a fire, and a woman was cooking a potato soup. But the way that they dug their hands into it and alternately scratched their legs as they sprawled on the earthen floor successfully discouraged me. I opened a tin of beans and after dealing with the contents threw away the container and prepared to find a place for my sleeping bag. The members of this small community made a dive for the empty tin and the successful one held it above his head triumphantly. Odd things assume value in the forest country of Ecuador.

As I dislike "fug" or heavy laden atmosphere, I slept outside on a veranda of rough wood. But it was comfortable enough and I drifted off into an easier world almost at once.

My mental 'time piece' woke me just as the night squeezed the last drops out of its allotted period. I found myself covered with ants which, not content with roaming the area of my carcass, had exercised some mysterious prerogative and eaten chunks of my person at will. The Indians at the hut assured me that the ants rarely visited them in such numbers and that this was one of their infrequent field days.

So I sat in a cold stream, squished all the crawling marauders that I could find, dressed, and cooked myself some rolled oats.

We were away in a very short time, and the day passed in much the same way as the previous one. The trail presented similar hazards, it rained and towards the afternoon we began to climb again.

At 4 p.m. the track widened and assumed an air of im-

portance. Riding ahead I saw the first hut for ten hours, and then another and finally a collection of them built around a rectangular field on the slope of a hill. This was Baeza. The buildings had lost that *Oriente* appearance and were more civilized in type, though still "buts". There was a small bungalow amongst them which turned out to be the police station. The resident Ecuadorian official greeted me, but subsequently raised a long story about an "explorers' licence". But I could see that he was doubtful about it and on subsequent questioning I learnt that such a "regulation" had been under discussion by the Government for some time, and that this fellow was uncertain as to whether it had been passed. The idea was that each "foreign" venturer to the *Oriente* should buy a \$100 licence. I explained that most of my party were already in the *Oriente* and had been there some months mapping unknown Ecuador for the good of the country. But few things happen around Baeza and this representative of law and order probably felt that he should create recognition of his position in this possibly forgotten outpost. He assumed an attitude of governmental dignity and said that as there was some doubt about the matter I must turn back, or wait until he had heard from Quito. But finding that I appreciated his position he eventually relaxed and when I showed him a Royal Aero Club certificate with its polite demand for assistance in emergencies all written out nicely in Spanish, he adopted a more lenient demeanour and, after enjoying a tin of my beans and sharing a cigarette, he okayed my passage beyond Baeza.

During the evening I heard one man discussing gold with another. It seemed that a great deal of it could be recovered from a nearby river. And that the 'colours' washed were "white lemon". This suggested the presence of silver.

I was awakened at 3.30 a.m. next day by a lot of shouting and Indians fighting around my 'sleeping bag' on the dark 'veranda' of a sizeable hut, which had traded me shelter for a few *reales*. One of the Indians trod on my foot in the midst of the scuffle, so I got up and cussed both combatants who were also standing on my clothes. This temporarily quietened these two but not the women, who were arguing and following each

other about the house. Frequent slaps on feminine faces echoed throughout this crude building and then a lot of hitting with pieces of wood and the throwing of things began a circus of which I appeared to be the centre. Again a few clouts temporarily quietened things and then the native subordinate of the resident policeman came on the scene, threw verbal javelins of Spanish at all participants and peace reigned temporarily. It seemed that one Indian had won affections to which he had no official right. And I gathered that not only a husband but yet another rival entered into the question. Then there was jealousy on the part of a woman that had been "cold-shouldered", and the collective debate, which had followed the hut-owner's discovery of a heart stealing episode, had risen in a flash from whispers to a 'free for-all'. The long and short of it was that the possessor of this abode told these erring hangers-on to get out, and the native orderly went further and encouraged them to leave Baeza at once. These 'destroyers of the peace' were evidently friends of my muleteer, and as they all decided to proceed towards the *Orsents*, he was anxious to leave with them. I had no objections to this and was glad to get away early, so that by 4 a.m. we were on the trail, breakfast having seemed an unnecessary obstacle to progress.

Again there were more rivers to cross and about eleven in the morning we began to climb another range. It rained almost at once and, as the trail became narrower and more muddy, the downpour seemed to gather in intensity and many times I expected my mule to slip over the edge of the precipitous slopes. Of course it didn't, because it was a mule and anyway such a drop would not easily have been survived.

Instead of softening, the rain became a deluge and hailstones hammered in our faces, water poured down my neck and it was like old times again. I wondered if Mont and Carl were enjoying such a party in the Llanganatis.

At the crest of the range there was a natural 'look-out' or observation point, and, gazing as far east as my vision could take me, I could see nothing but a dove tailed tangle of green. There were high trees and it was a high tangle. It wasn't a "bright" green hut from this point through the rain it appeared

as a dirty dark shade of that colour. If Pizarro came this way the sight must have disheartened him considerably.

Adventure magazines, going the limit, converse in such terms as 'Impenetrable Jungle' 'Confused Green Hell'

'Intertwined Mass' 'Unconquerable Forest Land'

But the view of the country ahead suggested all these things and when I thought of Eric's party a couple of hundred miles the other side of my tangled horizon, I understood something of the discouraging trek to come.

About 2 p.m. we descended into a quiet, noticeably fertile valley which had also been visited by the rain that had swamped us for two hours. Here two large huts, chickens, dogs, and Indians put in appearance. But Indians of a different type. Many of them wore only a loin cloth and were 'bronzed-yellow', slight, and agile. Others wore the usual "western" peon's dress. Here I was able to obtain poached eggs on rice, as well as a very welcome potato soup. Its manner of preparation did not interest or disturb me, as I was more concerned with counteracting the chill from my recent collar of hailstones.

The stay only lasted half an hour and at once we began to enter tropical foliage. Perhaps I have given the impression that much of the vegetation, which we had already passed during the previous days, was tropical. It had all seemed so, in comparison to the shrubbery of the Andes western slopes, but now longer lianas hung occasionally a hundred feet above us and swung gently as we brushed or pulled at their ends lying on the path. Unrelenting roots of big trees beside us, stretching across streams bordered by palms, represented part of our trail. Thin inch thick stems rose to join hanging viney and 'storm bent' foliage, whilst the 'path' through it all was another leaf strewn 'cave', rough with more roots and logs.

Through the dusk I eventually saw a crude one-roomed shack built on stakes and walled with thin sticks. It stood in the middle of a morass and long before the mule began messily to stumble towards it, I knew that this would be laundry day for

me. Fortunately there was a river which ran nearby. In no time I was up to my knees in mud—it was asking too much to persuade the struggling mule to carry me through—and frequently I fell over and put my face in it all. I didn't know it, but this was a 'picnic' to what was to come. The muleteer's 'outcast' friends numbered the sum total of four and there were approximately another four inhabitants already in this mud marooned abode, which seemed to be little larger than a normal bathroom in size, without the bath.

They told me that I'd reached Jondachi, but whether the name referred to the hut, the district, or to the morass, I never quite discovered.

I sat on a rock beside the river and dried my trousers before a fire. That is to say I occasionally turned them on a stake erected near the feeble flames, and, in the intervals, spooned to my palate the contents of another tin of beans.

Somehow I found parking space amongst that glut of humanity. Had there been any cross questioning as to who had bathed recently I should only have bet on myself. Despite the cracks in the walls, the aroma of the interior suggested the stomach of a whale. It was not possible to safely sleep outside, there being no "veranda" of the type that I had managed to find hitherto. And many mosquitoes sauntered about. I had no intention of tolerating a malanal nip yet, although I knew the *Orients* to be riddled with this fever.

Mr Juan Clark of the Quito American Mission had taken much trouble to make this trek easy for me. Just inside the *Orients* it appeared, a mission "outpost" had been set up at an Indian village called Tenz which, for some ambitious reason, had been equipped with a radio transmitter.

Through this medium Mr Clark had arranged for a couple of Indians to meet me at Jondachi, where I was to leave the muleteer, the trail being too "bad" for mules from there onwards. This was what I had been told. In the morning I discovered just how "bad"——

From the word go the day's progress could only have been defined as slogging along with mud to the knees, not always soft, relenting mud, but the stuff kind from which a leg put forward takes with it half the countryside.

It meant that to make anything like a commendable journey, I had to become a 'root hopper' I watched the carriers to learn how I might qualify. It was not often that they put themselves to the trouble of wading through this constant morass. There was always a root every yard or so and with practised balance and much bounding, fair distances could be covered without much "falling in", although such an incident usually crowded a series of more than a dozen of my frog-leaps. Roots were always sloping and my boots refused to hold. If, by chance, they did allow me to "land", I invariably skidded on "taking off" for another root, much to the amusement of the two "pack" Indians. I don't suppose they had ever found much to laugh at, until I appeared on the scene. This introductory experience was apparently enjoyable to them.

Eventually the mud became more washy and I gave up my kangaroo acrobatics. I could not make out whether I was walking in a river or just mud, it seemed to be both. But there was no clear water to drink and so much expenditure of energy was thirst provoking. Yet on the principle that 'it' would 'cure' I managed to stave off thoughts of cool bottles of Bass. Eventually a "desert-dream" species of "crystal-clear" creek gurgled across the slushy trail. I then decided that I had *not* been walking in a river.

Shortly after leaving the stream, several almost grotesque copper skinned Indians, dressed in little less than a girdle, with faces painted in blue streaks, appeared out of the path but in the bushes at my side. Probably, or I should say undoubtedly, they had beat me coming and had intended to 'sheer' out of the way. But the jungle was thick and such a feat was not easy. After seeing them I should *not* have been surprised if Deerfoot-of the Prairies had slunk onto the scene and emitted a war squeal.

The surprising thing about these people was that they carried guns. I had never before associated the idea of *Oriente* Indians with anything like this. We all had a good long stare at one another and, when I had gone by, the Indian carriers grunted something at them in *Quachua*. They were interesting looking fellows, but were the type that one only expects after a supper of matured cheese or in a Hollywood colour epic.

Their faces were inclined to be what is by many generalized as "Mongolian" although to give a more likely portrait I should have said "Burmese"

At three in the afternoon a rocky hillside brought temporary "finis" to the sloppy trail but the rocks were also muddy and the path narrowed again to only a few inches in width. To reach the bottom of this hill before the climb we had to cross a violent river over a felled tree trunk. This emitted various cracking sounds when I was at the middle of it, but apparently it was merely a protest, and I completed my Blondin act successfully. Once over the hill, the going was more encouraging for the path was wider, but the mud managed to slow all motion.

We reached the banks of what must have been part of the slashing, bubbling river already crossed, I passed beside this for some time and recrossed it. I opened a tin of sardines but they were bad, a fact which for some reason I failed to notice until my meal was well under way.

When the evening came the carriers turned off the trail which now led over little hills into partially open country, and I followed them to several huts, one of which had a storey above the ground floor. It was to this that they led me.

Now began the bargaining for food and shelter. There was much discussion with a raven haired Indian woman, barefooted and in the usual thick skirts of the "west". Finally I was given permission to sleep in a room upstairs with the carriers and I found it extraordinarily clean and furnished with basket mats, a bench and table—crudely done, of course, but I had not expected this in the *Oriente*. I exhibited some cents and was brought a mug of *raspadura* syrup as black as treacle, to which of course it was related. But its taste was more agreeable than any molasses or honey that has ever crossed my palate.

Then the 'husband' returned home and there was much argument. He came up to inspect me—a wild looking species but dressed in trousers—and when I had shown and promised him some money, he went off. After my arrival at the hut, the Indian carriers disappeared. I expect that they were getting something to eat. They came in when I was about to sleep and lay in the opposite corner.

One thing that I had noticed so far about the Indians on the eastern slopes, was that though ~~inoffensive~~, most of them were rugged individualists and if they didn't like a thing, they made their ideas apparent. Money appeared to be of secondary importance and if their intentions failed to coincide with your plans, it failed to disturb them. I wondered how long a Poona Sahib could deal with such people before sinking beneath the clutching hand of a stroke.

CHAPTER XXIII

AT two o'clock in the afternoon energy is not always at its highest pitch. It was the following day and my entourage of two picked a careful way through the forest whilst I did what I could to preserve *gringo* prestige by attempting to keep the pace.

Our course for an hour had followed a gentle decline, through mushy ground, knee high with small plants, head high with the larger kind, whilst trees grew to all altitudes and sizes from thicknesses of an inch. Yes, our course followed this slope, but the carriers, probably with a reason, eschewed the fact that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. And so our route snaked backwards and forwards amongst all these 'feet long' green and brown leaves.

It was along this section of my journey to the Rio Napo that I experienced the first jungle that really approached the type which blood-and-thunder magazines manage so colourfully to pen for us.

Steam was actually pouring skywards from all quarters of the virgin forest about me. Thick wisps of it rose in that semi-translucent way, a warming reminder of efficient bathrooms back across the mountains. For the trans Andean trek had been a chilly one. Involuntary bathes from muleback had been unwelcome "refreshers" in air which had chosen to nip rather than to dry. The atmosphere had not been entirely conducive to my conscientious morning washing, which had been nothing more than cold cat licks. These had had little effect on the remaining four or five layers of caked Ecuador and additional blemishes collected on the journey. I usually prefer cold water to hot, but each day I had grown more savage with the irritations set up by the lack of a good hearty scrubbing brush and a basin of boiling water.

And to-day it hadn't rained, throughout the morning the temperature of the air had risen pleasantly and here was jungle really steaming, permeating my constitution with a warmth which had come to stay.

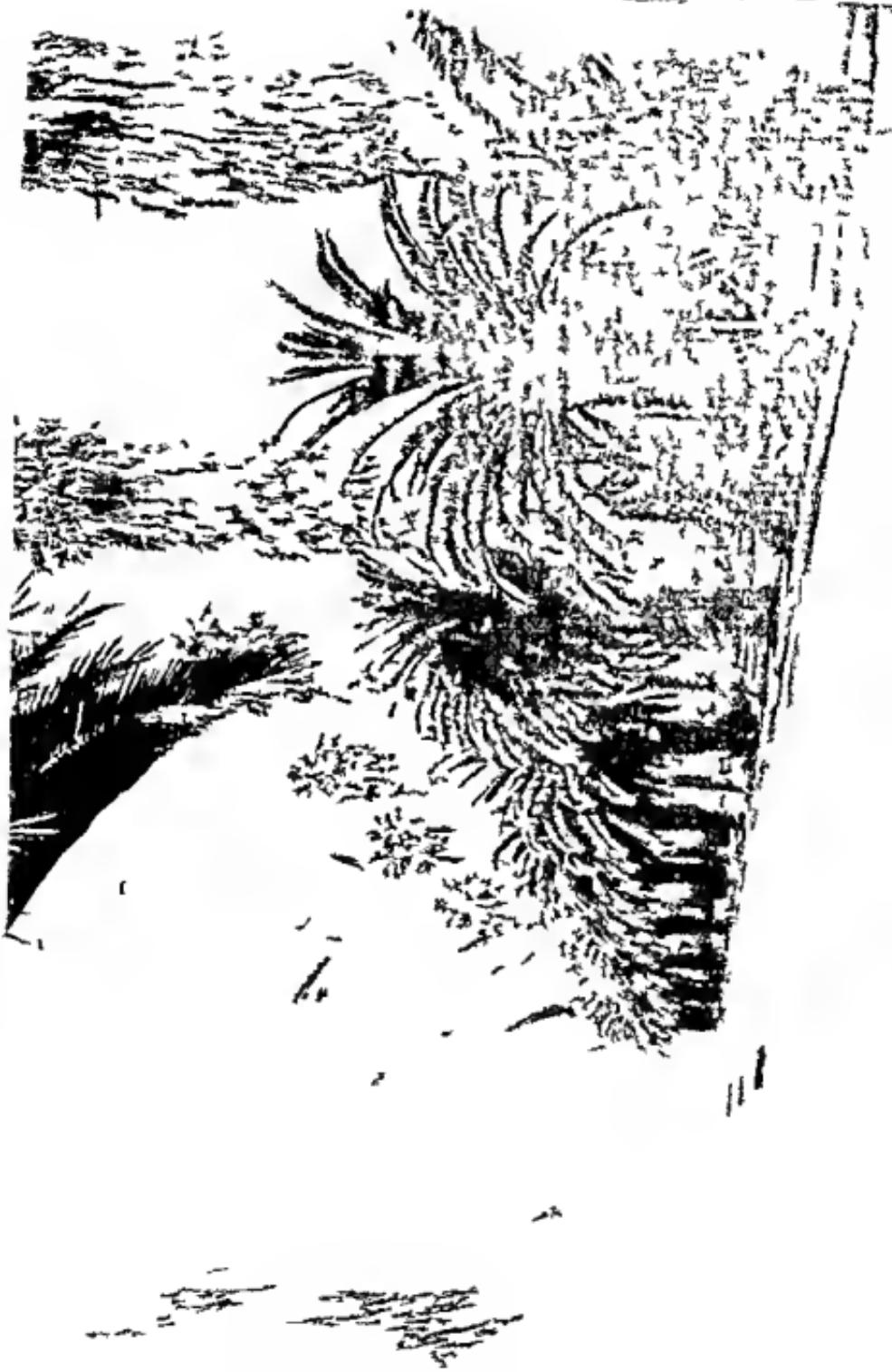
As if to add all the colour of which magazines are capable, every possible type of butterfly which my imagination (and it usually neglects study in this direction) could have conjured, fluttered through this 'stream' and massed exotic-looking troops in my path. We passed a hut built on stakes, which must have always avoided molestation whilst that large monkey capered on the roof. As I watched, it retreated, then came to peer again, thrusting its head forward and screwing up its eyebrows as if suffering some perplexity. All the undergrowth and trees were a very fresh shade of green, except for—as I have intimated—various brown leaves. The copper-coloured mud contrasted vigorously with the surrounding foliage. I wished that I had included a colour film in my camera equipment. It was certainly a scene that should have been shared.

At four o'clock we reached what was comparatively open country and the beginning of a very definite and well constructed path. Only a little way ahead there were fields obviously under cultivation, and everything as usual was again green. I rounded the next bend before the carriers, and was amazed, then extraordinarily pleased, to see a horse and Indian standing beside the track. It was my intention to buy, hire or annex that animal, if I had to go the limit of my dollar bills and I.O.U.'s. But I was pleasantly thunderstruck to find that the horse and its guardian had been there all day awaiting my pleasure. This was a further example of Clark's organization by radio.

Trekking anywhere is more often than not an exhilarating pastime, but when many pounds of thick solid mud accompanies each leg through even more menacing morasses, so that in the end you appear to be wearing those waders which you didn't bring, the exhilaration stage passes to an anticlimax. So that it was pleasant to scrape away what I could of this suggestion of elephantiasis and heave myself once again into a saddle.

From this point onwards, I took a special interest in what I

DEVEREUX DRIVE



could see of the developed *Oriente*. Huts were again in sight on these cultivated patches, but in the distance there appeared to be a regular village.

Yes, said the 'horse Indian', who could speak Spanish as well as *Quichua*, we were coming to Archidona. By the trail were occasional raised platforms like crude bandstands open except for thatched roofs. In one of these an Indian, with bobbed hair, a painted face, and dressed to the waist only in a form of sarong or skirt, swayed and flung himself about obviously drunk. He rantled and screamed, issuing frequent bursts of *Quichua*, and often hurling himself to the ground. It was a sight which aroused not amusement but pity. A woman stood nearby waiting to catch him every time he dashed himself at the floor—.

I passed more Indians. Nearly all of them had blue streaks on their faces and were drunk. The Tena Indian walking alongside of the horse said that this was a 'holiday' and that everyone had been buying *chicha*. Very soon I was between the huts, which stood in an orderly fashion on either side of what amounted to a road. I entered an immense open space, in every way resembling a football field, which must have been the town "square". All the more imposing constructions of the town bordered this earthen *plaza*.

Everyone certainly had been buying *chicha*, there were few sober faces, but a great deal of gaiety. It was good to watch these poor people getting some fun out of life. Out in that wilderness, there could not be much else to which they could look forward. Yet from what I have now seen of *Oriente* villages, I should imagine that Archidona is the largest of them all.

My three disciples led the way across this large allotment, and nobody took any notice of us. Very shortly we had left the village behind and were encountering mud again—black mud—but "nothing" in comparison to the previous type. Fruit trees (orange and lemon) grew in a half wild state well away from the village. I picked up a fallen orange and sucked noisily at its sweetness, with a leg slung round the pommel of the saddle. This was certainly "relaxation plus".

The horse, given its head, led the party along the now less

perceptible trail up slippery banks and across creeks, through a muddy bog—cousin to those that I now knew so well—and finally beside a wide river which we followed for a mile and then swam. The evening was drawing to a close, but I was not cold, only damp. The trail went on again between less congested foliage than I had found on the slopes of the mountain several hours before. The disadvantage of the way now was that the horse was finding it slippery.

Then suddenly in the dusk we reached Tena, a village with about ten large buildings. They were more like shacks than huts, and all were thatched in the usual *Oriental* manner. I was shown the one which had been partly responsible for the ease of my trip, with its aerial stretched triumphantly above the village. Here was an *Oriental* link with the rest of Ecuador.

But, not stopping, I rode on across this smaller town "plaza-cum-allotment" and being directed down to the banks of a large river, which must have been the same one that I had swum earlier in the afternoon, I crossed with water swirling well around the shoulders of the horse. Our course then lay up and down slippery hills until finally, at the side of the trail, a notice, dimly readable in the half light, proclaimed in Spanish that here was the estate of the Tena Mission.

Down a road of black soil the horse swung briskly with ears stretched frequently forward. The way was again bordered by fruit trees and palms, until we reached steeper slopes and a soft slushy track which brought us on to a cleared hillside above a racing river.

The Indians indicated that I was to leave the horse. The fellow who had brought the animal to the outskirts of Archidona unsaddled it, and the two carriers led the way to the water's edge. A dug-out canoe was waiting, and once the craft had been launched out from the bank with its complement of three, the Indians paddled violently with the bow pointing slightly upstream. In this manner we crossed the fast flowing river and reached the other side several hundred yards below the point opposite which we had embarked.

A quarter of a mile back from the water's edge stood a two-floored bungalow, with one or two disconnected outhouses. There was a pleasant garden and when I walked up the stone

bordered path, a figure in white greeted me. He was the Indian missionary who had arranged for my horse and carriers.

An organized swim in the river by lamp light, a change of clothing, and a hot meal at the well kept table shared by the missionary's wife, and his assistant, brought forward a different aspect to the events of the day. And I was told that I was only a few hours from the Napo river.

The assistant added yet another surprise by telling me that he was Rumanian. He spoke French but then my own was negligible so that our conversation continued in Spanish, of which I now had a serviceable vocabulary.

After an early start my host and I reached the Napo on horseback by eleven o'clock in the morning. Fate had been unnecessarily obstructive, the Indian missionary observed. Usually it took half that time to reach this Amazon tributary. But since first his mount and then my own had to be dug from the trail, extra hours had slipped easily by.

Yes, I mean "dug from the trail". The leading horse had lain with his tail out of sight and only his left foreleg showing above the yellow morass. We had levered stakes underneath him and had hoped that the points were slipping below his hide and not through it.

Probably it had been a prod from one of these butchered saplings which had encouraged the horse to summon all energy to that burst of mud shower floundering, which had left him sprawled and gasping on firmer ground—like a fish on a river bank.

Finally he had recovered, munched at stray pieces of grass, and had ultimately been resaddled.

The animal under me, not as fiercely virile as I should have liked to depict him, had also lacked what must constitute horse sense. "Mule-sense" would have been a better word.

Having seen its friend nearly disappear into the bowels of the earth, I should have expected it to well survey every other square yard of the trail, especially as I had given it an entirely free head. But no. Very soon I had joined the ranks of the wallowers and had lain with one leg under the horse, half encased in another tenaciously hospitable bog.

However, we had finally reached Napo, still 'on horse-back', although the trail had been as bad as, if not worse than, that encountered between the morass known as Jondachi and the village "limits" of Archidona.

From above the morning's trail, the sun had projected a burrowing ray until it had seemed that there could be little moisture left in our constitutions, which had not joined the waves of steam skyward bound. As is usual, my bugbear—thirst—was terrific. Tormenting visions of massive ice boxes, with frosted bottles, had projected disturbingly into my mental studio.

I had watched the trail for fruit trees, recollecting the oranges and lemons on the route from Archidona. But none had appeared.

Finally after a diversion during which the Indian carriers following behind had caught a black rabbit in a bush and wrung its neck, I had spotted a tree laden with a mysterious yellow fruit, suggesting a species of nectarine.

It had been an attractive sight for a swollen tongue and I had picked one ready to wolf the whole thing at a gulp. My companion, then travelling behind my horse, had shouted a protest in unintelligible Spanish and, spurring his animal forward, had knocked the fruit from my hand.

"Poison," he had muttered after drawing breath to recover himself, "POISON."

This incident probably saved me from further unsatisfactory experiments with arboreal provender, and possibly the frustration of my plans to again see Piccadilly.

The village of Napo at the head of this river consists, like Tena, of about ten Indian "houses". Unlike those in Tena, however, not all the huts in Napo were "thatched". They spread in some cases along the water's edge or else well away from it.

Perhaps this represented the usual Ecuadorian idea of preserving a town square or *plaza*, for most of the houses were built around another rough rectangle, again resembling a football field, though it would not have made a very satisfactory one.

Our first act was to locate an Indian who would not only sell, or hire a canoe, but be prepared to accompany me down river for several hundred miles.

My host led the way to one of the larger houses where we were plied with oranges picked one by one from the surrounding trees, as they were required.

"Yes," volunteered the head of the household, as he swung lazily among the veranda shadows in his hammock, "perhaps you *can* obtain a canoe . . . and Indians . . ."

"Fine, I intend to get away in a couple of hours."

The Indian smiled benevolently, looked sharply at me to see if it was a joke, then he shook his head.

"You cannot do that, *Señor*."

"But I can hire a canoe . . .?"

"I think so."

"And Indians . . .?"

"Yes."

"Then where is the delay?"

The old man looked towards the missionary shrugging his shoulders good humouredly.

"The *Señor* does not understand," he smiled.

My companion looked embarrassed and explained as best he could.

"You see that is not the way of these people . . ."

"What?"

The householder in the hammock took his corn-cob again from his mouth, and a thread of saliva bridged the gap between the two.

"Perhaps, *Señor*, in a few days time . . ." he began.

I experienced one of my infrequent rushes of blood, and summed up my view of the situation in what Spanish vernacular I could command. That good fellow, the missionary, seemed disturbed.

"We shall go and see what is possible," he offered. "You can never tell . . ."

The old man stared amusedly as we left the house and told us to come back later, which we eventually did, to enjoy more fruit.

There were at least a dozen canoes tied to various sections

of the river bank. Two had been pulled up on land, one was being repaired, and a large dugout, obviously built up in sections and quite like a Roman galley, tugged tightly at a stake as the twenty mile an hour current swept beneath it. We approached the Indian carpenter who was dealing with his docked craft.

"Canoes? No, I haven't any. Perhaps Señor Maldonado . . ."

So we walked to the house of "Señor Maldonado", quite a distance down the river bank. His "housekeeper" welcomed us for she knew my missionary friend. No, Señor Maldonado was not at home, she did not know when he would be back. He had gone down the river, she had not been told where, and there were no canoes for hire.

I pointed to the four or five dug-outs tied to the bank below the house. The woman shrugged her shoulders, and repeated that they had no canoes.

The "house" was of course an enlarged shack, with a long veranda looking south and facing the river. I was thunderstruck to find, in the bare room where we conversed, the remains of a piano. How in the world had such a thing reached this outlandish spot? Surely not over the trails that I had traversed. The "lady-of the house", having noted my barely disguised indignation over the fact that no canoe was to be had from this quarter, was not disposed to discuss pianos. But when we left it was a question which occupied my mind more than that of the canoe. Yet I never discovered how this unwieldy musical instrument had put in appearance at Napo.

"Have you a canoe? Then do you know where one can be obtained? What about those that I see over there?"

But the answers were always negative until one Indian mentioned "Señor Riviera". The prefix of *Señor* amongst Indians usually denoted leading men of the village, and apart from Maldonado, Riviera was the only other inhabitant to whom I actually heard it accorded.

He received us well, and after a lengthy discussion during which he attempted to evade the subject upon which he must have received word that we would come, canoes were finally mentioned.

Riviera, a man of liberal bulk, looked capable of striking a

good bargain, and undoubtedly was about the biggest "fish" in this forgotten "pool"

The two front flaps of his serviceable trousers were encouraged to their rendezvous by a broad belt around his disciplined paunch. He wore a grey flannel singlet, whilst a slouch cap shaded his rotund smile of suspicion.

Yes, he thought that he might do something for me. When? Oh, Thursday—or Friday—

It was then Monday. By now the trick of suppressing my more violent thought until ten had been slowly counted was no unfamiliar occupation. I pleaded, I protested, I scoffed at Riviera's dilatory business methods. At length I swallowed the hook. I would pay anything, I told him, but I must have a canoe, a couple of Indians, and get away at once.

He made a dramatic show of appearing to weigh the situation. Then he sent for two Indians, told them to their obvious disgust that I was to be paddled down the Napo, and bade them off at once to prepare an appropriate craft.

At this unexpected termination to Riviera's apparently procrastinatory attitude, I relaxed amazed. Riviera turned to me. He had heard about the ways of *gringos*, he said, and their aversion to the *mañana* (to-morrow) spirit of his people. He respected the "American" manner of doing things, and would arrange for my getaway to be prompt.

To me the terms for the Indians and canoe hire were surprisingly moderate, though perhaps my appraisal of the business failed to coincide with Riviera's private shrewdness. For when naming the figure, I noticed that his sharp eyes were searching my face. But it was all a very amicable arrangement and I have no idea what my length of stay would have been at Napo, if it had not been for this commercial giant of the village.

Perhaps—

But there is little use in concerning myself with what might have happened for I was successful in getting away within the hour. Yet others have trekked to Napo with the intention of getting somewhere.

"Where?"

"Oh, to begin organized gold mining somewhere in THE,"

said the German Swede, whom I had found unkempt oo a crude bed in a hut, as he waved his hand in a circle which encompassed the eastern jungles

"But this *mañana* of theirs," he cootinued, "it stops every-
thing. You can't hurry them. If they waot to stop, they stop,
and that is that. You still have to live."

He had been existing "on the country" for many months now, and this, in the *Oriente*, demanded an iron constitution. He looked very ill.

And incidentally, to digress for the moment from my Napo visit to the present, Eric—when I last heard from him at the beginning of this year (1939)—mentioned in his letter that he was suffering the ravages of sprue and fever to a New York nursing home, the sprue having resulted from living long periods on semi-edible roots of the *Oriente* such as yuca and others, which at the time he had regarded as novel dishes

I first tasted yuca at the Tena mission when it was served fried for the evening meal. It would have surprised me had I known that it was to become more of a "standby" than Grapenuts, and that there would be oo limit to the ways in which I should see it prepared for mastication. It is a species of yam, related to manioc and cassava root. Yuca found in the *Oriente* has a cyanide of potassium coating, which permeates into the first few layers of the plant so that the root has to be scraped and frequently boiled before it is eaten.

My new acquaintance at Napo had fever which, he remarked resignedly, had "eaten through to his marrow". He con-
versed with me in Spanish and said that having spent all that he ever had in this insect ridden part of the world, he only now managed to eke out a living by washing gold colours upstream in the Napo. I told him of another Swede whom I had met, bearded, blond, and penniless in Quito. I mentioned how this tall giant, dressed in a much-worn navy blue suit and tattered white sandshoes, had made a polite ritual of daily approaching me on the subject of his impecunious situation, and I described how this Quito Swede had obviously taken with a grain of salt my very genuine regrets that I, too, had been unable to jingle *centavos* in my pocket.

The fellow's story was that he had been in the Galapagos

Islands off the South American coast, trying to wrest a sort of Robinson Crusoe living from the unrelenting conditions there. Later when I reached New York I read of a peculiar settlement that had been made many months before on one of those islands by an odd group of people. I forgot the exact details but the long and short of it was that some had died of fever, others couldn't stand it and left, until finally the community on this particular island had been reduced to a trinity of which a woman, whom I believe was married to neither, had formed the apex of the triangle. With the inevitable result.

The article had given names and had spoken of unleashed homicidal moods on the Island. As far as I could remember one name coincided with that of the man from the Galapagos whom I had met in Quito.

But my German Swede friend of Napo had never heard of him. Dismissing the subject I asked him what quality of gold he had washed from the river. He showed me a quill of it, not exactly "white lemon" which was the colour I had heard existed near Baeza, but rather a very bright yellow.

Having been in an old Quito cathedral where masses of gold plate and ornaments had flashed and reflected the light of candles to create one of the most dazzling displays that I have ever seen, I asked him where it had all been obtained. The stupidity of this question I saw almost at once. That gold, he informed me, had been taken from the Incas. Beaten into shapes demanded by the friars of the Conquistadores, it had been in the possession of the churches ever since.

To leap once again ahead of my story for the sake of the immediate subject, I must bring you temporarily back to London where, months later, on a newsreel, I saw "shots" of a very splendid gold crown, set with emeralds, which, valued at over a million dollars, was announced as being on show in America. This crown, said the news-commentator, had been lying in an Ecuadorian church since the Conquest, another link to the story of the treasure of the Incas.

CHAPTER XXIV

CHARGING like a torpedo down the Napo with those slashing waters pitching the canoe like a cockle shell, I experienced speed boat pleasure. In a flash it seemed that the village of Napo, my missionary friend, Riviera and, for the moment, a lot of disconcerting mud wallowing, were all far behind me.

As we swung round a bend in that bubbling river, I asked one of the Indians who could speak Spanish, what house that was high above the bank ahead.

"That is the house of a *gringo*."

When asked what *gringo*, his hearing became conveniently impaired. I gave him a poke to encourage an answer. But he only shrugged. So I was cursed with "grunt" Indians. Yet I didn't carry the argument further. I have had my fill of trying to bring people out of themselves, a wearying and usually profitless task, and so I left the two of them to do what they willed, as long as we moved downstream.

In an unnecessarily short space of time it rained. It is not my intention to fill this book with descriptions of rain and more rain. But it certainly came down strongly and flooded our "pride of the waves". The drenching reached its fiercest just before we approached our first set of rapids and as we shot between the rocks at an angle which was very much downhill, the speed of the canoe increased, water splashed over the low gunwales in the manner to which it had been inevitably tempted and I felt that we had passed through some sort of initiation.

The rapids came and went. There seemed to be a number of them, and then about five in the evening we reached a long straight patch of river, which was perhaps a quarter of a mile across. As soon as the rain ceased, the Indians drew into one of the wild looking banks of soft glutinous soil, and cut a

covering for the canoe from the entanglement of trees, leaves, and viney

Taking thin saplings and splitting them, they erected a series of half hoops about the level of my head which, lashed together with liana, formed the frame-work of a curved roof in and out of this frame work they threaded palm leaves and when the time came for me to slide back to my seat in the canoe, it was necessary to bend and recline at an angle. Still it appeared fairly rain proof and I found myself looking forward to the next downpour in order to "try it out"

Darkness came on very quickly. I stopped the canoe at the first serviceable sandbank, arranged for it to be drawn well out of the water, then I made a fire.

The Indians rushed off into the scrub waving *machetes*, and finally returned with more saplings and palm leaves

What now?

They lashed the stakes together so that the frame constructed resembled a raft. Then threading the palm leaves into it, they completed what was obviously to be a shelter

But instead of driving four stakes into the sand for each corner of this leafy cover, they cut out two and drove them in so that they stood with forked ends, three feet in height

Two corners of the "shelter" were then fitted into the forks, the other two corners resting on the sand

Having dashed off mine expertly, they now proceeded to build a shelter for themselves, again with the sloping "back" to the wind, whilst I secured some smaller stakes and propped a mosquito net over the space where I had unrolled my sleeping-bag beneath the leafy frame

I possessed one cooking pot, and in this I heated a tin of beans whilst the Indians chewed yuca root which they boiled in a can of their own.

It was an odd feeling walking on that wet sandbank at five o'clock next morning. After stuffing back my sleeping outfit into the duffle, I cooked some "rolled oats" over the fire for which the peons had acquired fresh wood

By a quarter to six we were on the river again. It was an "experience" to see the sun rising up over that wide water horizon whilst the busy ripples beside me dashed onwards as if

keen to share this more intimate family communion with the solferino rays

But as the sun mounted higher, the speed of the river slackened, and the Indians were induced to paddle, although not very frequently. Passing over more rapids, we swept forward around bends occasionally broadside on, but the balance of the small craft was very good. At another right-angle twist where the banks rose fifty feet on our left and the water's edge was rocky, the river looked deep and we hugged its borders to avoid a whirlpool, which had appeared suddenly beside a peaceful setting of palm trees.

The banks now rose vertically, the water became placid with only occasional ripples indicating that it was moving. The sun had enlarged its angle and become hot with piercing intensity, but as we slid between these high sides and under the overhanging trees, a peaceful coolness soothed the senses and progress was pleasant.

Then when these rocky walls had diminished to their normal height, which was a matter of a few feet above the river it began to widen, and rather than be insignificant—and hot—in the middle of a vast sheet of water, I chose a course beside the northerly bank where thick foliage and trees of about a hundred feet in height hung over at an angle sufficient to extend the pleasure of a shady trip.

I had of course the palm leaf canopy to keep out the glare, but it meant a cracked neck and after I had tried it for a few miles, I preferred to sit out in the similarly confined, though open space of the canoe. An occasional monkey rushed the length of an extended branch and grimaced with a worried expression. Several otters darted from the sticky riversides into the water. Long tailed parrots of practically every hue and rich in blues, greens and reds, massed into the high branches and then, as if at some sign, took off again screeching.

It seemed that I was entering quite a sizeable lake, so wide had the river become. Also it appeared to be hardly moving at all so that the peons had to paddle a great deal. But as I have already intimated, their attempts were flavoured with half-heartedness, for which I did not blame them in the least. They had been hustled away from home on a many week trip.

which meant much exertion and work under the *padron* system. Riviera was of course their *padron*. They expected no payment and it must have seemed to them an unnecessary, literally thankless job. Why did any silly *gurgo* want to be paddled down an infrequently used river where there was little food and many insects. They didn't know and could only wear glum expressions of martyrdom.

So I offered them the equivalent to half a crown each if they paddled as continuously as they were able every day. If I appeared as *Cæsus* to them after this, they gave no sign of it.

The insects of the *Oreamus* I had somehow failed to take into consideration when planning the trip, for I had not suspected the presence of so many aggressive varieties.

For the first two days, I travelled in shorts and sandshoes only—most tempting to mosquitoes—whilst a topee lent something to this minimum attire which seemed to impress the Indians more than I did.

Very soon I found my ankles swelling to the size of the calves of my legs and the 'Borga' responsible turned out to be a minute form of fly which injected an irritant. It took more strength of mind than I possessed to avoid trying to massage away the stings. And with each rub from the fingers, the poison spread further.

Then there were larger flies, wasps, and other heavy bombers, which struck at our faces probably unintentionally. So many of these species inhabited the better patches of river bank that we didn't stop to eat, but had a scratch meal in the canoe, the Indians chewing yuca whilst I munched bananas which they had brought along.

That evening a deserted *sauve* hut on the edge of this large 'lake-like' section of the Napo sheltered us. The floor was of thin strips of palm about three feet above the ground.

A patch of clear sand on the opposite southerly bank of the river had appeared most inviting, but when I suggested this as a camping site, the more uncommunicative of the Indians came to me with Spanish which I did not know he possessed.

"No, no, no . . ." He shook his head violently. "Les *leñeras*, les *leñeras*—"

"Les *leñeras*?" Then I remembered. *Leñeras* means "wall

men", another name for the mysterious Ssabelas which Eric had come to seek

That next morning I found 'pin pricks' in my toes and felt weak. Due to the beat I had slept *on* the 'clothes' instead of beneath them. The Indians indicated that I had been visited by a bat.

Three days down the Napo I approached what appeared to be a De Mille war canoe being poled upstream. It had a large palm leaf canopy and was manned by half a dozen Indians and—

I strained my eyes to discern what I could of the strange figure which stood erect with arms folded and one foot on the gunwale of this gargantuan craft. It was just where an island separated the Napo into two rivers which swept independently into the jungle, curving perceptibly round again to doubtlessly meet further down. My cockle-shell tossing about in the splashes of some very gentle rapids, had been preparing to take the northerly course around the water locked piece of land ahead. The sturdy looking monster beading upstream had chosen the southern strip of river.

My Indians had long ceased paddling, with the exception of an occasional subconscious dip to half straighten the canoe, as they gazed at the approaching craft.

The crew became plainer. There were four Indians behind the canopy concerned with the poling of this Leviathan and two with poles in the bows. But this other figure? A light gleam suggesting white duck trousers and—yes—a blue sash (or was it a bandana) binding their union with a bright red shirt—

The big dug-out was now only a few hundred yards away, and as Indians began to surreptitiously edge the canoe towards the southerly watercourse up which this odd river party moved laboriously against the stream, details became more distinguishable and I saw this violently hued figure in all its glory.

A luxuriant dark growth disappearing behind his head hid most of the broad features of this adventurous Caribbean type, who was regarding me as intently as I was inspecting him. A red bandana covered most of the wide forehead, whilst a

shaggy mane interlocked with the other growth behind his ears. That leg, planted forward with such gusto on the vessel's side, was booted to the knee, whilst a small monkey on the shoulder of this figure, stretched its claw frequently towards his corn-cob pipe, attempting all the time not to overbalance.

I studied the features of this colourful individual more closely. Captain Kidd? No, better still, Pizarro's ghost still haunting the *Oriente* where most of his entourage of thousands had been lost. But I was too slow.

'Huh—Alasdair—well, I'll be——'

The voice at least was identifiable. No, not Eric, but that old snake in the-grass Sonny ("Sunny" would have been a more appropriate label). Complete with Cheshire Cat expression he was enjoying a temporary respite between tough bouts of fever which had not yet managed to kill his spirits.

We ran both canoes ashore and whilst he tore at his share of the accumulated mail which I had brought to cheer the party, he told me that he was on his way back to Quito for malarial treatment. He had seen quite sufficient of the *Oriente*, but he gave me good news. Eric was on the Napo river. He had left him only eight days ago excavating on the southern bank and truculently fishing up ancient pottery.

Sonny mentioned that the expedition had done a lot of good work mapping, so far, well over three hundred miles of river.

"It seemed we took star sights all night and plotted by compass all day," he said. He told me tales of the famine-stricken country through which they had passed along the Curaray, and coloured it with accounts, which Eric later confirmed, of gigantic spiders, "Man Friday" footprints in the sand, and boa-constrictors. He added further inspiring information dealing with the hardships of the trip and went on to say that fever had been trying to get at them all, that the medicine chest had suffered a heavy run on quinine.

Sonny's appearance with his uncurbed hirsute mask, and unbarbered shaggy head-crop, suggested extremes. Standing in the bows of the large dug-out with his tall boots, pet monkey and bandana round his head, he had only needed a *matabe* and a parrot-cage to represent all that was blood-thirsty.

Yet the Sonny cleaning his evening confiture with a river-

dipped comb (which restored dignity from chaos as it ran around his face and then through the bun at the nape of his neck) resembled everything that was peaceful and religious I think that he realized that he had something, for he wore it back to New York where, incidentally, it failed to lend the confidence expected, and merely brought restless nights to his family and 'goose flesh' to his feminine companions

Now that I knew Eric to be on the Napo, I decided to travel part of the way upriver with Sonny. His crew were Jibaro Indians, straight haired muscular fellows who, in their own language, called themselves *Shuara*

They came of a tribe who inhabited the virgin forests around the Ríos Pastaza, Morona, Upano Santiago and their tributary streams. These regions are politically-divided between the Republics of Ecuador and Peru

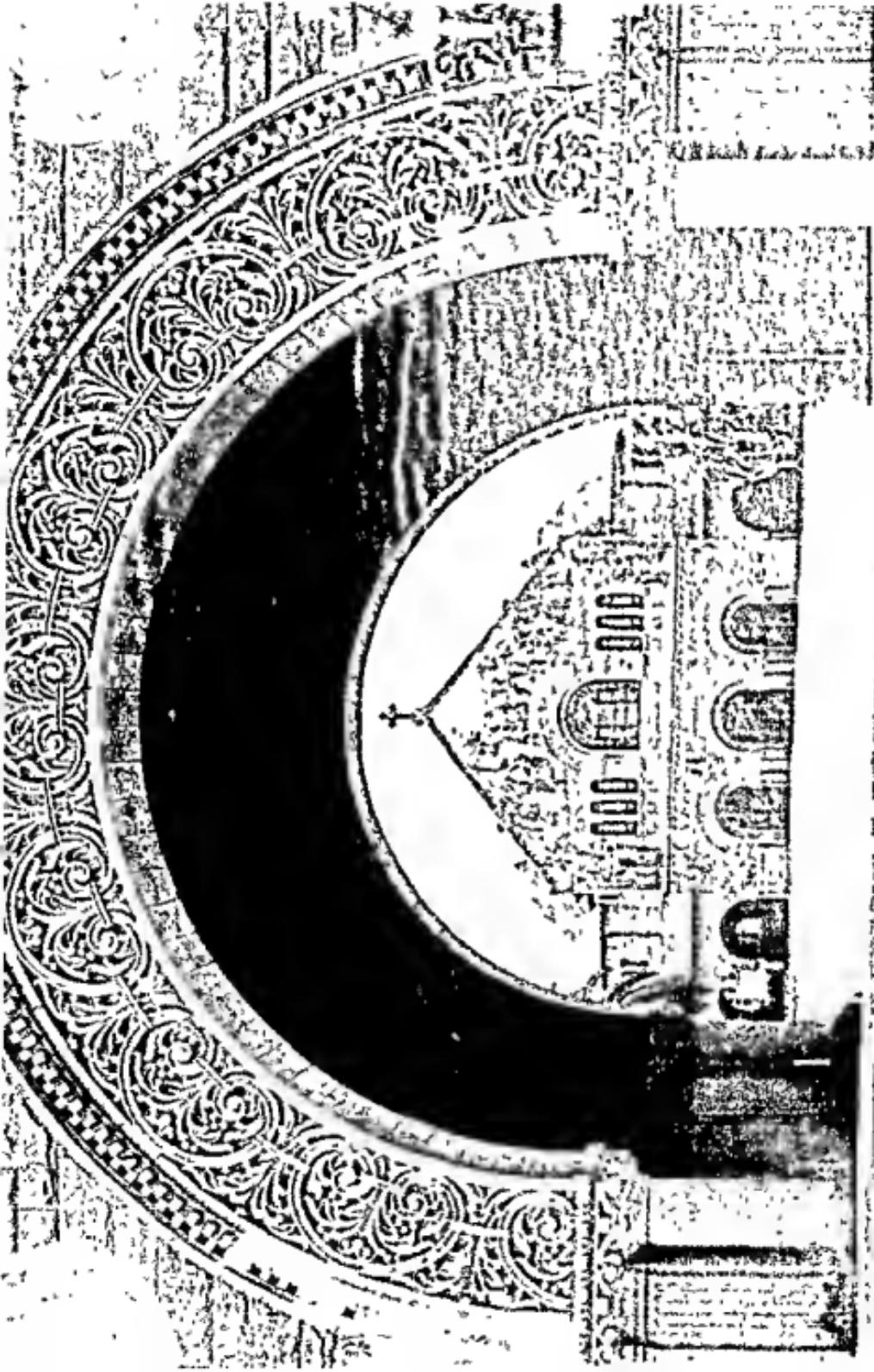
It is confirmed that the Jibaros still form one of the most numerous and important Indian tribes of South America. Despite the fact that some Jibaros live in "unpenetrated" country their 'hazarded' total is said to be around fifteen thousand at least

They are divided into smaller tribes which do not always preserve geniality towards each other. They are said to be without uniform tribal organization, and do not recognize any ordinary political authority

This division also stamps their social institutions and customs, which differ amongst tribes. They have invariably been able to show a united front against any white interference and in 1599 they are alleged to have carried out an incipient rebellion against Spanish oppression on the Upano, Pauto, Santiago and Morona rivers. Most of the white population in the flourishing villages of Sevilla do Oro, Logrono, and Mendoza were massacred. After this the whites, with very few exceptions, managed to leave the Jibaros to themselves. Eric had lived amongst Jibaros on a former expedition. This, I learnt, had enabled him to encourage the chief of the Jibaro tribe living around the Puyo district to hire him some men

Puyo, an *Oriente* village approached from the west through the pass near Baños, has civilized contacts. It has a canteen and, most surprisingly, a telegraph station. Any form of civilization

AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY, CALIFORNIA



sooner or later brings to bear the old fact that money is an asset. And the Jibaro chief, who was now accompanying Sonny back again, had been prepared to offer his services, at a price.

But, as I have intimated, the Jibaros do not care for white domination and, according to Sonny, the old chief, whose name was Severa Vargas, had in every way shown his dislike of the new, wild, foodless districts in the far east of Ecuador. He had complained of the insects. No insects like these had ever plagued Puyo. He spoke and dreamed of this 'twelve or thirteen hut' hometown. Severa was an old man, yet his tribal life had been dramatically adventurous and he recounted some blood-curdling details.

Not many years before, he had stormed this village of which he spoke so highly, and had taken it. According to him self, his prestige as a chieftain among the Jibaros of that district still increased yearly rather than otherwise.

He showed me a deep furrow edgeways across his tongue, and an old wound in the back of his neck—the course of a bullet. Someone, he told me, had tried to kill him in his sleep—

This, he added, had greatly reduced his strength, which had been 'twice that of most men'. He certainly had fine muscles and a husky torso, but he said that he tired easily.

I asked him if he knew who had shot him and a gleam came into both eyes. Yes—he nodded his head slowly and malevolently—he did know the man. He was not living in the *Oriente* now, but—

If that man could have seen what the expression of old Severa plainly said, he would appreciate the advantages of continued existence in western Ecuador.

This Jibaro chief told me that his race were the most warlike of all Indian tribes in the country, and their blood feuds and battles of extermination between parties were continuous and nourished by witchcraft. He agreed that these wars did no one any good, but that things were a little quieter now. Still, he added, men have to fight, they must. How otherwise can they achieve true fame? Jibaro warriors carried spears and shields, but preferred guns.

Not unnaturally I asked him about head shrinking which is the speciality of his tribe. He indicated that these *tsantcas* or head trophies which are taken from slain enemies were not merely tokens of victory, but are considered to become charged with supernatural powers, and form a basis of Jibaro religion.

Yes, I conveyed to him, but what about these killings to obtain heads and shrink them quickly for sale. I had been offered several in Quito with perfect features and luxuriant hair (in one case the head of a grey haired woman).

Severa shook his head. That, he said with a bland expression, was a bad business and they were trying to stamp it out. But what could you do, were there not wrong-doers in every community?

A wise old man, this Puyo chief, shrewd and cunning. I wondered if he had actually offered his own ideas regarding the traffic in shrunken heads, and whether, as far as he was concerned, such trade actually went on unsanctioned.

If his tribe was so war like, I asked him, what were these tales that I had heard, whispered in Napo, of the fierce Ssabelas, *las aukas*?

Oh yes, he had heard of *las aukas* (only in one case did I ever hear them called Ssabelas), they were very strong and very savage and kept away from other tribes except for very occasional early morning raids. And then people were butchered wholesale—

This is all the gist of what Severa told me. He spoke besitant Spanish, I spoke it badly, and gesticulation entered into a great part of our conversation. He continued his information to add that whereas the *aukas* were wild men only, the Jibaros were "quietly" brave and powerful. Where the Jibaros wore clothes (a crude skirt to the waist) Ssabelas wore nothing at all, except a twine girdle to bind the loose parts of their body when carrying out a raid.

Regarding the man trap with which the Ssabelas were said to guard their retreats I gathered that one method was to dig a hole in the ground four or five feet in depth and large enough for a full grown man to fall into. At the bottom of the hole three pointed sticks are arranged in an erect position. These

pointed sticks were called *asbs*, and they rise about five or six inches above the bottom of the hole. At the surface, the opening of the hole is covered with sticks and leaves, which disguises it from the skulking enemy, until he falls into it. Then, of course, his feet are staked on the pointed sticks, and he must await the pleasure of his captors.

A different type of trap is also erected on the trail along which the enemy is expected. It consists of a big branch or a small tree which is bent down close to the path with one end fixed in the ground. On the upper end, eight pointed sticks are lashed in such a way as to form "teeth of a comb" about a foot in length. Then this stake with its "comb" is pulled back from the trail into a bow and is fixed against two special poles. Attached to these are strips of liana which are run across the forest path in such a way that the contact or entanglement of a man's foot will render him liable to a thump in face or chest from these sharp stakes. As most "attacks" were said to take place in the dark hours of the morning such traps were not always evident to the wary marauders.

After this description, I appreciated the fact that I had been born a Briton and not "of the Orient."

Once again I returned to the subject of shrunken heads and war feuds. It appeared that to the more religious Jibaros, the death of a great chief is engineered by some Indian who has wished a curse on him. The tribe's witch-doctor carries out a séance, in which he decides that he has discovered the name of the supposed assassin. The sons of the dead chief are told and a "blood satisfaction" policy is prepared. It is often enough to kill the brother, or uncle of the assassin. Frequently these feuds are handed down through generations. Witch-doctors are constantly consulted throughout their duration and dreams are carefully noted for a bearing on the blood thirsty matter in hand.

Once "satisfaction" has been achieved and the victim is lying stiff and cold, the head is "collected."

The method of shrinking ran apparently as follows. A knife-cut is made at the back and the skin of the face is gradually drawn from the skull, the adhering parts being cut gently from all bone which is then thrown away. The scalp is then

placed in boiling water and left for a while, after which it is hung up on a stake to cool

Then the part which was slit with a knife, to remove the skull, is sewn up. Three stones are then taken and heated. One at a time they are dropped into the "head" through the hole of the neck and are rolled round inside, burning and searing the skin, which has already been partly shrunk by the hot water. These same actions are then repeated with hot sand. Throughout the ceremony the spirit of the dead man is always supposed to be haunting the head. Everything is done to keep it at bay.

Whilst hot sand is being poured inside, the head is swivelled so that the sand acts on all parts, the chief object being to burn away any remaining flesh. The trophy is reduced in size by the repetition of this procedure and, as it shrinks, the face is carefully moulded by the fingers of the shrinkers, so that every feature is retained. Three small sticks are placed through the lips of the shrunken head, sealing them from ever issuing home truths about the slayer. Around these wooden pins, twine is threaded, and the whole *tsantsa*, now the size of an orange, is usually dyed with charcoal.

In Quito, I had examined the heads, which I had been shown, carefully. The hair was always glossy and usually black. I had been told that these commercial specimens had been reduced too quickly and that they were pseudo inasmuch as proper *tsantsas* take months to shrink. The Jibaros say that this is not so, that, instead, it is a matter of weeks only. But the ceremonies (first, second and third feasts), continue over a long period.

I asked Severa if he had any shrunken heads back in Puyo. He pursed his lips and again that gleam came into his eyes.

But instead of answering, he merely smiled.

CHAPTER XXV

A DAY after meeting Sonny, and the Jibaros at his disposal, I left him, advising against his intended trip back to Quito via Jondachi. But I was afterwards convinced that this trail was a motor road compared to the way from Napo to Puyo and back through the more southerly Baños pass.

On my sixth day down river the two normally silent men in the canoe broke into animation and, pointing to the right bank, appeared to have reached some excitable conclusion.

As had always been necessary, I had to dig one of them between the shoulder blades before I could squeeze out an explanation of these antics.

Having been prodded, the gentleman in front of me condescended to share his discovery but, at the last moment, I reprieved his breath, for I had finally 'got there'.

In the interwoven mass of dry looking jungle, a clearing had been made and there was a familiar 'tent fly', a familiar Hector, and a real live Eric.

At least I guessed it wasn't Tolstoi, for that penetrating gaze, and those features, could not have been disguised by any facial scrub.

When I saw him he was sitting writing at a camp table, in front of which three Indians were shovelling away the soft-soil half-heartedly.

Nearby squatted Hector the Panamanian boy with an air of authority.

I drew in to the high bank and heard the familiar exclamation.

"Alasdair—by God!"

Leaving the mapping party on the Curaray, with instructions to proceed overland to the Napo "somewhere to the North", at the completion of their astronomical "sighting", Eric had taken one of the outboard-driven canoes and had gone ahead

on a search for more Indians. Above a village which he had heard was somewhere on the Napo, strange pottery had been pulled from the crumbling river banks and word of this had spread from occasional Indian to Indian and finally to the party on the Curaray. This cut deeply into the mind of Eric, who has much of the antiquarian in his make-up, and after arranging for the hire of more men, he intended to lay his hands on some of this ancient clay moulding for the Heyes Foundation in New York.

And so here he was, with Indians churning up the black banks of semi sand for the occasional pieces of antique potter's art which appeared in various shapes, though usually no more than six inches across. Eric had fever but despite this fact he was not losing any time. Between "ruses of blood" at the disinterest of careless excavations of the diggers, he had been writing like an author possessed, only slowing down to clap at the many aggressive varieties of insect life with an affinity for his neck.

He was as glad as Sonny had been to get his mail and read out to me with a laugh the contents of a New York letter. "Be careful", the epistle warned him; "There is treachery in your midst . . ."

It took me months to realize that I have been considered the "treachery", owing to my name having been affixed to Albert's "Riobamba-New York" radio'd discussion of an explorer's contract.

I asked Eric why he had needed more Indians, having originally set out with a reasonable complement. After his first two words I knew the answer.

"Severa Vargas . . ."

Yes, that shrewd old Jibaro, who had denounced the discomforts of the eastern *Ortente* to me in such vehement terms, had fallen back on an attitude of civil disobedience when Puyo had seemed too far beyond his horizon. Vargas, and his sinister underlings, had not accompanied the grinning Sonny up-river solely for the latter's comfort. They had both happened to be going the same way.

With a long mat of sandy hair, parted on the right and dramatically swept backwards to mingle with the lesser ends of

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the more splendid mop resting on the thick shirted chest, Eric might have stepped directly from a celluloid epic of tom toms and missing men.

To offset any other jungle simile would be to describe the life that he and the party actually did live on the Curaray, and possibly here on the Napo. Faces had peered through bushes, strange native foot prints had been seen on the forest banks opposite the sand *pias* on which they had camped, and odd noises had been heard during the night. He told me that according to what he had gathered from occasional Indians, the Ssabelas emit the cries of animals and birds before they stage one of their gory free for alls. The idea possibly being to allay the suspicions of the intended victims. For when danger threatens, it is said that jungle life becomes chillingly quiet. Most of their trip down the Curaray, according to Eric, had been made in an atmosphere of uncanny silence. But I do not intend to touch on any of the facts, or exploration which Eric has recorded so modestly in his recently published book.*

The trees around the Napo "excavation-camp" were tall, thin, and dry, but the jungle retained its impenetrable appearance. I made several solo excursions for distances up to half a mile into the bush and had great difficulty in shaking off the thorned plants and many ants which attached themselves with determination to my skin. Although I climbed into high branches to survey the country ahead, I never discovered signs of native habitation in the virgin forests towards the south. Passage through them always had to be made with a *marrete* and headed head.

For a week after my arrival we remained on this site, and whilst I supervised the digging for pottery which had begun to offer a little more of itself than usual, Eric wrote at his table like a maniac. Hector was usually sulking somewhere nearby. He had my sympathies and, I believe, Eric's as well. He was a long way from home. Apart from his cooking duties his status appeared to be doubtful. To himself he certainly held the position of "overseer". Though "overseer" of what, or whom, was never quite decided. I used to pitch into the digging and thus, as far as Hector was concerned, in the way of

* *Fever, Famine and Gold* by Capt. Eric E. Leach D.S.O.

the usual native mind, was putting myself on a par with common Indians. He was extremely conscious of his 'spark' of Spanish blood and, although as black as midnight, he enjoyed proclaiming with dignity that "White men" such as himself did not share the habits of the rabble that served as our labourers. It usually required the threat of some physical discomfort to enable him to see the light, and dig.

I had not brought a camp bed, which would have meant an extra Indian carrier or mule for the trans Andean trip. At night the ants used to creep into my nocturnal 'blanket bag' and, as I slept without pyjamas, every night was a public feast as far as they were concerned. I would awaken with more markings than a leopard.

The Indians were ever conscious that we were camped on the Ssabela side of the river. With the excuse that there were too many insects about the camp, they used to sally forth in the evenings under the 'guardian ship' of Hector (who, if the truth were known, was probably also glad to get away) to a sand bank in mid stream.

One morning the tide rose and they narrowly missed a rather moist finish. After that their 'fryingpan fire' dilemma was very apparent.

The routine of the day began with a breakfast of rolled oats and cocoa prepared by Hector, after which Eric would head for his pen and papers, whilst I surveyed the Napo's banks from a canoe, for other signs of pottery. After this, more excavating would begin under my stimulation.

Lunch was the least pleasing meal, for boiled or baked yuca eaten under that broiling sun, and insect cloud, hadn't the same appeal as at night.

Or perhaps in the coolness of the evenings, after we had bathed in the hot water canvas "tub" and had sat down to "dine" with a poet's sky of orange and purple, the inspired conversation had eclipsed our palates.

Where some people need mountain chalets and immense rooms to plan adventures that surprise the world, Eric's temperament asked merely a camp-fire meal at dusk and a good plug of native tobacco.

In such circumstances his exploratory instincts found voice

and rose to geographically threaten every jungle. Eric has always set his limits beyond those of ordinary men and usually he gets there "or busts". Tenacity is his middle name, and as he aims high, he usually has something to exhibit.

He asked me what luck we had had in the Llinganates and I told him of the downpours that were slashing the camp when I had left Carl and Mont rainbound. As I described the conditions, the obstructionist ravines, the Inca pottery, the giant condors and signs of other mountain life such as the bear dens which I had often encountered, the "lion" (puma), deer, and tapir tracks, and odd calls at night, his eyes narrowed.

"When I've dealt with the Ssabels, I'll go there," he commented, and I knew that the Llinganatus were shortly to be "KO'd".

He was disappointed to learn that weather conditions had limited the trapping up there.

"That country is unchartered," he remarked. "The west needs a third pass to these jungles and their wealth. I think that the Llinganatus hold the key."

I described how we had attempted to investigate the legend of the treasure in part, and mentioned how my subsequent short journey of two days along the actual landmarks of the guide had taken me to the north of our first course.

"There must be no guesswork," he continued, "this country and the Geographical Society wants facts and figures. We must take extensive astronomical bearings, stick to every detail of the guide, and follow the trail to the end."

He eventually did so.

The three Indians to whom I attempted to convey the romance of old pottery were peculiar birds. They never conversed much with each other and rarely did their lack of Spanish encourage them to conduct even gestulatory conversation with Eric or myself. The other two who had paddled me all that distance down the Napo, had cleared off an hour after completing their bargain ~~down the river~~. Possibly the sight of so much money (five sucrea each) had encouraged them to break from Riviera's ties and, despite his pleas to me to see that they were hustled home in good shape complete

with canoe, they probably looked forward to some Grand New Life on the Amazon. In any case I never saw them again.

But the other fellows who dug for us obviously regarded their own home "fever-spot" as a Utopia compared to this literally buzzing retreat on the Ssabela side of the river.

Eric and I came upon a track which they had made along the river bank. It led over broken tree stumps and through mud to a point from which we could see the camp no longer. There we found a raft of *balsa* logs in a semi stage of construction.

"Odd fellows," was Eric's comment. Obviously this was part of their plan to escape from our "Devil's Isle". But instead of destroying the raft, which somehow would not have been very fair, we decided to move upstream for more Indians, taking along these homesick hypochondriacs.

The mapping party, despite original instructions to proceed up the Napo, had not yet arrived. The next major item on Eric's programme was to enter what he considered to be the Ssabela territory. The objection to making the excursion without Indians was that a complement of only one or two would confine the exploratory movements to short treks from a main base. There was always the possibility that the *aukas* did, as they were rumoured to do, lay those "man-traps".

With several dozen Indians, we could not only put up a formidable front if attacked but also clear a wide track into the territory along which a retreat could be made if common sense dictated outlined it as being the more logical course.

And so we went upstream, much to Hector's delight and the stupefaction of the foiled "shovel brigade". Progress was very slow and the canoe, which was only of moderate size, had to be poled against the moving water.

As there were the same wide river strips with their wild dead looking scrub, tall trees and rainbow bird-life, I shall omit repetitive description of that route. However, after a few days we came upon a large native house, set back on piles in a cleared space behind trees, which I had unconsciously slid past on my journey east. It was another of those gigantic canoes which drew our attention to the spot.

The possibility of acquiring it and more men, as well as such minor etceteras as fruit, decided us on a halt.

We were successful, after many preliminary inquiries as to health, in obtaining a canoe from the old Indian "pioneering" this district. Though it wasn't quite as easy as that. Anyhow we acquired it and, having done so, bargained for men. In this direction we were not so successful and only managed to obtain two or three. During our overnight stay, the original crew took our small canoe and vanished, so that we had only gained in so far as our new craft was larger, and gave us more space in which to wave cramped limbs.

Quite a pleasing purchase was an addition of half a dozen fowls. These ultimately "rode" on the gunwales which offered quite a lengthy "run".

After our arrival at this Indian *baranda* (which again had been built away from the Ssabela country) I left Eric fishing for the always reluctantly given information on *aukas*, and marched down to the river with a cake of soap and towel.

Almost at once I stumbled on one of the most revolting scenes which have come my way. Two ancient Indian witches half squatted by the water's edge with a large cooking pot balanced on a rock near by. Lying on its back in the river was the corpse of what appeared to be a boy of twelve, and the old women were picking at the entrails of its opened stomach. But in the semi-dusk, I had been mistaken. It was not a boy, but a large ape which must have been the nearest approach to the 'Missing Link', barring my own reflection.

One by one, bits and pieces of the interior of the animal, which lay as if sleeping in the water, with "size 6" human feet bridging the gap between its anthropoid race and my own, were thrown into the cooking pot. After that I walked half a mile down the sandy banks before I could concentrate on a swim. My personal friends may rub their hands gleefully but when you have been confronted with the sight of a couple of hags tearing bungally at the slit paunch of a figure that might be a twin to your own, it is disconcerting.

But further along the bank my revulsions were temporarily obscured by the surprising sight of a gigantic ant 'route-march' which was wearing away deep grooves across a

neighbouring field. Their traffic was in all cases "one way" and the 'mass-expedition' poured to the river's edge and then up the thick trunk of a tree which hung over the water. The returning forces proceeded down the other side of the trunk and began their parade back into the jungle. It was the greatest massing of insect troops that I could recollect. I took care not to experiment with them and guessed that big things were happening inside that tree trunk.

As that evening meal drew near I experienced a certain gloom. Finally when soup was produced—we were guests of the old Indian—I pleaded nausea, which was in no way a perversion of the truth, and announced to Eric that one meal less per day never hurt any man.

"The old fellow is watching, get some of it down," Eric muttered out of the corner of his mouth, fearful that my ungraciousness would cancel the hard won day's bargains of men, fowls, and the canoe.

"Could you palatably stomach giblet juice from a corpse?" I protested, but Eric sensibly intent on preserving peaceful relations gave no show of hearing.

Subsequently I appreciated his wisdom and, concentrating on battle ships and the Albert Memorial, I gulped the vitamin'd gruel with sound effects which certainly would have pleased a Chinese host.

Next came the monkey meat itself. This I consumed with a similarly disconnected concentration. But it was quite good, tasting like chicken. And after this first occasion I was to subsequently have it several times. It had been the vision in the river which had lent insurrection to my stomach.

Fruit, as I have intimated, was plentiful around the 'estate'. Large oranges were offered to us and we sucked at holes cut in their tops.

Perhaps this establishment had a general clean up once a week, but twenty hours after our arrival the same orange rinds and spat out 'stones' lay around on the veranda basket mats.

The 'stones' were from fruit which resembled plums with a hard skin, yet this skin encased the 'flesh' and juice of a grape. I wrapped up two 'stones' in my pocket and, eventually, on arrival in London put one in a jar of earth beside

our central heating system, where it was discovered and 'dealt with' by the maid. The second I sent to "Suttons of Reading". They passed it on to an eminent man at Kew Gardens who was good enough to supply me with the information that it was the seed of a rare species of something-or-other only found in South America. The something-or-other was, of course, a nightmare in Latin.

A small *mono de noche* monopolized the crude veranda of this *Oriente* residence. This "night monkey" was a luxurious chestnut shade with a face like a possum. Certainly I should never have called it a monkey for it ran on all fours. Calculating feminine fur lovers would certainly have bargained for its scalp with ecstatic visions of some future church parade, but although it was offered to me, at a price, its preservation as far as Ballos, quite apart from a trip to London, would have set an unnecessary drain on my emergency Aspirin hoard.

After another couple of days slow travel up the Napo, the Indians obtained from the old man disappeared in the manner of the others. This happened during an overnight stay at another native hut. By persuasion, bribery and the presentation of many articles of Woolworth's stock one or two members of the local family of seven were persuaded to pole us "just a little way further".

After this we camped on sandbanks well away from the very occasional huts that appeared, again encouraging the Indians, with exhibitions of the colourful reward to be won, to again pole "yet a little further". But they were good fellows and stayed with us until other Indians could be found.

By this time I had fever, which I had expected, for all mosquitoes regarded my neck as their base and practically every insect came for a cut off these tender British joints. Of course Eric already had malaria.

The flies, both the minute "poison injectors" and the larger variety, came in never-ending swarms and it frequently seemed impossible to breathe without inhaling a dozen or so of one variety or another. For relief I would tie my few bandanas around my neck and face, baring only my eyes between these coloured clothes and the topee. On one occasion when I had spooned a black mass from my cocoa, the taste of which

had long been obscured by 'fly flavouring', another six or seven dived in. It was just as I was about to raise the bandana from my mouth in a swift attempt to drink the mess. In disgust and irritated by nips on my forehead and neck, I had another "rush-of-blood" and beaved the lot into the river, complete with spoon. After this, regret weighed heavily upon me for there were no substitutes amongst the skeleton equipment of this minor party.

The nights became fairly bright under a full moon and during one of them when Eric's fever was allowing him a respite and my own tame germ was throwing itself against the bars, I saw a "boa" slide into the river ten feet to my left. Eric at the time was sleeping on my right and he awoke when I rose and stood by the water's edge. We watched its regular half-minute splashes, each one measuring roughly thirty feet. This doesn't mean that the "constrictor" was this length, but when I first saw it, twelve feet of limb thick "tail" was following the preceding coils into the water. The Indians had warned me not to bathe in the sandbank lagoons.

I had seen fewer snakes in Ecuador than in Malaya where the gardener used to kill several daily. Yet not seeing them here did not mean that the jungles lacked their complement. Those that did cross my path in the *Oriente* had a nasty look in their eye.

We received a welcome break in the monotony of river travel when a Quito acquaintance of mine, Dr. Walcott of the Rockefeller Foundation, appeared on the scene, with Riviera's largest dug-out and that great man himself. Accompanying them were Indians to paddle and others lying on their backs, ready to give up the ghost. These had been collected from Napo districts. Walcott was able to supply us with some quinine, which lent a new perspective of the world and our circumstances. He told us that the fever said to be raging in the *Oriente* was not "yellow", but that the Indians who had it resigned themselves at once to an early end, which made the treatment uphill work.

It is an odd thing, this complete expiration of the determination to live, when any serious illness overtakes a native. As we neared Napo and occasionally drew in to the banks

where there were huts, the Spanish speaking member of the crew would investigate and usually come back, climb into the canoe and order the others to push off again. In annoyance at this independence we would question the man, always to receive the same reply

"The person is dying"

This was the case at the location of an old deserted native farm. By "deserted" I am using a comparative term. Obviously scores of Indians had worked on these weed ravaged clearings with their orange trees, but the only inhabitants now were two women and a man who had fallen from a tree and broken his leg. He had fever as well, and these Indians refused our attention. He was dying, or intended to, and that as far as they were morbidly concerned, was that.

One of the women prepared *chicha* for our crew. There are two, or perhaps several, sorts of *chicha*. But those with which I became familiar were either in the form of a drink brewed from corn, or else as in this case a food concocted from yuca root. And what a food! She prepared it under my nose.

The yuca was scraped, the woman bit pieces from the root and spat them into a leaf lined basket. But they were first well masticated. Then, when the basket was filled with its disturbing contents, leaves were covered over the top and the whole thing was stored away in the canoe. The reason for this method of preparation is that the saliva from the woman's mouth, mixing with the much-chewed particles of yuca, constitutes a mess which eventually ferments in the basket. This prepared dish is eaten mixed with a little water with much gusto at meal times and gives the Indians great alcoholic boost. On two occasions during my subsequent trip to the west, I chose this alternative to hunger.

Passing the whirlpool and rapids upstream was not the easy matter that it had been during the descent and the big canoe nearly overturned. The Indians told us that once another canoe carrying gold had fallen victim to this whirlpool. One hears odd stories woven around gold in Ecuador. It is a tangible basis on which the Indian imagination can really go into action.

Amongst the hug white, water worn stones in the Napo, I panned several "colours". The metal is there all right and the

specks can be seen by just peering into the river. But is it there in workable quantity?

Then in just under two weeks after leaving the site of the pottery excavations, the village of Napo again came into view. It was welcome, for it suggested the end to our Indian problem.

Here we should obtain a workable gang of men I reasoned, casually forgetting my former dilemma at this very place.

CHAPTER XXVI

OF course we came up against the stone wall. After the first inquiry for men at Napo, I knew how hopeless the forth coming 'argument' was to be. Our coaxing—our proffering of dollar bills—our flaunting of Woolworth commodities was obviously to mean nothing to this peculiar 'obstructionist' attitude of the local inhabitants.

Riviera was still "down river" with Dr. Walcott, Maldonado was away, what Indians there were with peons in their 'employ' evasively eluded our diplomacy until finally, in disgust and beat, we trudged to the village canteen to work it all out over a sickly red cordial.

But that sticky mess soothed the savage throat and cooled my brain. Though a little late, all the wheels began to turn smoothly, and I remembered the words 'that is the house of a *gringo*'. So we inquired about him and found that this *gringo* (here the informant snuffed) had many Indians, and that his name was Souder.

Built with a wide veranda on a small hill, half a mile from Napo village, Souder's house looked south on to the swirling river bend, from a height that must have been quite two hundred feet above the waters. It had only a couple of rooms and an earthen kitchen, but it could boast of the best situation in the district.

Sam Souder appeared to be over six feet in height. His nationality was unmistakable. You could have dressed him in the billowing robes of an Egyptian guide or the costume of a Balkan peasant and the sum total would still have been a hundred per cent American. With his sharp features, thin face, grey hair and a lanky body you could practically see the Stars and Stripes draped across his chest. Yet his speech was an extraordinary blend of three languages.

Indians about the house who failed to 'bring back the

I LEFT ENGLAND

bacon" in their own particular department were berated in veteran American punctuated with *Quiebus*, after which Souder, still overcome with disgust would turn and switch our resumed conversation into Spanish. Just as suddenly, five minutes later, he would revert back into florid "United States".

He was a nice fellow, very generous at heart and certainly most hospitable. Working under him as an overseer to the Indians was an Ecuadorian aged about twenty five years. I noted with envy the voracious appetite of this assistant and with surprise the way he proffered us things that belonged to Souder.

The latter's Indians lived mostly across the river and while he thought that he might do something for us, it remained to be seen which Indians were in residence and which were not, for most of them were "on leave".

Having seen what little I had of the *padrone* system, it had never occurred to me to identify a peon with the idea of a "furlough".

Souder explained. His men, he said, panned gold for him "down the river". As soon as an Indian filled a hollow quill with "colours", he brought it to Souder who "hartered" coloured cloth, shot or gunpowder. Indians were always keen for credit and Souder, on the usual conditions that they did not leave until they had worked it off, accommodated their demands. But as I have said, he was generous, and, he proclaimed with pride, "I'm an American." So he gave them "leave".

We canoed over the river. There were several native houses just inside the jungle which we reached across a wide sandbank. They were usually circular and thatched with curved walls formed by vertical *abontas* poles, a little thicker than an arm, lashed together with liana. These poles rose to a height of about twelve feet with the conical roof of the building often a good twenty feet above the ground. Around the outside of the circular pole walls, which the thatching overhung, ran a wooden hand of several pliable saplings with their ends lashed together, and every few inches of their lengths bound to a vertical pole. Naturally without 'dove tailing', a great deal of light came in through these walls, which left few shadows in the interior, but during a windy cloud burst these huts

must have few dry spots. The houses were each built around a main pole as thick as the human body and, inside, the floor was earthen, with a very occasional mat, a bed of poles supported by a thick stake at each corner, and several cooking pots. Most of the women wore one long piece of rough material tied to form a crude dress and their straight hair was cut in long bobs, clipped in a straight line across their brows, usually showing no forehead. They weren't particularly shy and most of the 'young' ones slung children in the upper half of their toga like muddy 'dresses'. The few men who were idling around the huts were dressed to the waist, and when we came to see them they half folded their arms and played with their lips in a self-conscious way.

The fact that there were so few of them depressed us. Souder shrugged his shoulders and said that most of his men had "cultivation plots" about twenty miles away and he would try to get word through. But his remarks, though well meant, were not very heartening, for they lacked enthusiasm. Perhaps his Indians had worked hard and a postponed leave would have upset his planned routine. As far as other matters were concerned he always appeared keen to do what he could. So that when, later in the day, we slid away down the Napo with only a couple of men and the promise of more "when a runner gets through to them", we ruminated as to how much we had gained by this long trip up-river.

At each occasional hut, encountered about once in a day's poling, we had picked up a lot of information on *los askar*, our intended Ssabela friends. It had always to be dragged out, in the way that one has to drag anything pertaining to the Leopard Society, from frightened West African niggers.

"Yes," these Napo pioneers would eventually volunteer, "they kill and they kill . . ."

"But what have they killed?"

"They speared my father—they murdered my son——"

"Where?"

"Near the Arajuno . . ."

The Arajuno was an affluent of the Napo, and a day below

its village—if you were travelling down with the fast current Souder had shown us two lances, one of about eleven feet, and the other cut to half this size.

"But why *cut*?" I had asked him

"These were pulled from two of my Indians," he had told us, "speared in their canoe, like fish, at the mouth of the Arajuno. When? Two months ago."

Another settler Indian, who spoke fairly good Spanish, had said

"Two weeks ago my cousins were fishing, just below the Arajuno, we found them dead—spears packed their mouths."

Nice people. Obviously the place to go was the Arajuno. We remembered this river. On the way up the Napo we had seen a sandbank opposite its mouth.

Only as we neared it did we realize how much we had bitten off. Confidently having told Souder to send his Indians to this spot, we now discovered that the proposed camping ground was not only damp rocky sand, but swarming with every flying pest.

Erie put on his glasses to keep these midget warplanes from his eyes, and out came my bandanas in an attempt to create a cloth armour.

We pitched the "tent fly" so that the open ends faced up and down the Napo, whilst the canvas sides, staked taut to within two feet of the ground, allowed a clear view up the sinister Arajuno rushing in from the south west.

Six feet high bushes grew vertically out of the sandbank around the camp. They were little thicker than a man's waist, and at night, waving gently in this district of alleged terrorism, they were inclined to stimulate the imagination. But I cut them down after a couple of sleepless evenings so that if we were to be serenaded with "war whoops" at least we should have a better idea of our moving targets. We slept at night with revolvers and accessible ammunition by the pillows but nary a Ssabela crept up to the camp.

And there was every reason why. To do so, they would have had to swim the fast river. The unfortunates of the past few months, whose life-blood the Ssabelas had mangled with the

ORANGE GROVES IN SAN FERNANDO VALLEY, JUST BEYOND
UNIVERSAL CITY



Arayuno waters, had invariably been caught dawdling on the southern side.

Souder had told us another story of an Ecuadorian with an *Oriente hacienda* in the shadow of the Andes, a day's journey south from Napo. The fellow's name was Carlos Sevilla and three months before, he had climbed out of bed for the first time for nine months. And the reason?

With a crew of seven Indians poling his large "dug-out" up the river, he had been stretched back cleaning a gun barrel under the 'leaf-canopy'. It was midday and the sun directly overhead had burnt through until the canoe had finally been directed in towards the shady banks.

Time had slid by as the polers, laboriously heaving against the current, had grunted rhythmically into the peacefulness of those overhanging boughs. With the slapping of water against the prow, the quietness of the forest's winged life, and the soothing coolness enveloping the dug-out, a suggestion of sanctuary had lent itself to the watercourse.

But the shrill cry of a bird suddenly pitched itself across the silence, and Sevilla, tired of shining his gun, had prepared to load it at the sound.

A bag of jungle-fowl would be a welcome change from yuca, he had edged with bent head to the opening of the canopy.

Almost immediately the sky had rained brown naked bodies. They had dropped from trees and overhanging boughs and bounded from the bank on to the canoes, shrieking with spears in hand. Quickly they had begun to despatch his men, and just as swiftly he had tried to raise his gun. But it had been knocked from his hands. Losing no time he had sprung to the gunwales and dived overboard. But not soon enough. As he had plunged to the water a spear had struck him between the shoulder blades but, because he was flinging himself forward, he escaped its full force. The dive had shaken it from his body and he had allowed the swift stream to carry him away under water. Some distance down he had climbed out exhausted. He managed to stay the bleeding, and finally found his way to a friendly native camp.

So the Ssabelas did not only attack at daybreak! For the first two days we paddled over to the *Aukas* side. Thick overhanging jungle, such as Sevilla had mentioned, leant well over the banks practically into the water.

The rest of the expedition were long over-due. There had, of course, been the mapping to do systematically, but taking this into consideration our parties should have merged two weeks before. In coming ahead with three purposes, Eric had found that only one had not run according to plan. He was yet without a proper gang of Indians. They had been promised, yes, but it was difficult to be happy about that promise.

Three weeks slid by on that torturous, fly infested strip of sand during which we watched and waited for something or somebody to turn up. The canoe Indians, which we had finally sent back to Souder with an indignant note, had not reappeared with a reply. Despite our nocturnal alertness, and dramatic precautions, there had been no sign of the "dreaded" Ssabelas whose "war stage" was alleged to be this section of the *Oriente*. And every day we had strained our eyes southwards, through the insect clouds, trusting expectantly that the big expedition "dug-out", with its quinine and full equipment, would suddenly round the bend and produce George, Peter, "Sparks", Castillo the interpreter, and the various 'steps and stairs' of Indian humanity allied to the expedition cause. All that we did see was the swirl of the 'Arajuno-Napo' rendezvous, the sinister half-dead looking jungle of the high Ssabela-country riverside, new winged 'irritants' arriving to annoy us, and Hector usually doing something not in accord with Eric's requirements. After particularly maddening attacks from the flies, I would tear off my clothes and rush into the river. Once, when I did this, a fish hit my toe, and I came out with 'super-extraordinary' speed.

By night a jungle-lion occasionally lent vocal colour to the moonlit quietness and frequently a crack that approached thunder heralded the crash of a high branched forest giant from the southern banks or Ssabela side of the Napo.

By day black vultures floated about and flapped on to the sand near the camp. They just sat there with apparently no

purpose whatsoever I don't think that they were ghoulishly coveting Eric or myself.

The whole reason for our drawn-out séance of heel kicking, in this 'Garden of Satan', was lack of Indians and ammunition Souder, if he wished, could have provided the former, and the latter, which was being rationed under the watchful eye of George, was with the down river party. After stringing together the few colorific details gathered up and down the Napo, on the habits of Ssabelas, a carefree trek into the "hornet's-nest", with only Hector and a couple of carriers, did not seem to be an entirely judicious move. In a way similar to the trigonometrical manner by which the position of a fog bound "radio-equipped" aeroplane is determined, Eric considered that he had plotted the position of the *aku* 'head-quarters', which of course was not the same as their hunting-ground.

All reports had mentioned a large *aku* town, built of high-roofed houses, on a mountain plateau. There were not a great number of mountains in the *Oriente* but the one which the Napo residents and others had claimed hid the Ssabela retreat was appropriately the foremost of them, a black hill rising above the distant southern jungles.

Several miles below Napo village we had drawn into a small southern tributary of the Napo and, having proceeded a suggested distance up it, Eric had climbed one of the taller trees and stared through his binoculars to try spotting the *aku* "town" which a more loquacious native had claimed could be seen on the mountain slopes.

But the distance was still too great to determine whether there was habitation on those faraway black patches even through glasses. Taking them from Eric, I found that I could make out no more than he had, and I gave up trying in case imagination should slip its leash.

And now we were at the 'corner' of these Upper Amazon affluents which a dozen sources of information confirmed to have been the scene of the most recent Ssabela performances.

More days went by in which the open tent fly feebly attempted to stay the attacks of rain storms, scorching sun, and pests. With it all Hector's fertile brain created new ways of getting its owner into trouble, fever blurred our vision to

regard his youthful cussedness as monstrous treachery, and when, to kill the monotony of the continual round of starchy yuca (which was already binding disastrously in our 'bread baskets'), he experimented unsuccessfully with the last 'root' and final piece of fish, it was too much for Eric.

Even in this complex mental state of 'neurosis-cum-harassed-oblivion' (due to the psychological effect of perpetually waiting and being marooned for weeks with the expectoration of flies as our sole occupation) I could not avoid being weakly overcome by the sight of a white bearded monster, towering to a height of six feet two, and a small black hoy, both exchanging home truths.

On this occasion Hector issued another of his daily resignations and to his surprise had it accepted. But of course he could do very little about it for there was no means of getting away, with our only canoe still on courier service up-river.

We still had a little food, although we had preferred to leave it clucking after worms along the sand bank.

If it had only just "clucked". But that cockerel, oblivious to the virtues of self-control, was too often tempted to higher vocal expression.

Eric struggled with himself. Was not the loss of a friend too high a price to pay for mitigated neural anguish? He was fond of this white bird with its jaunty red comb curving over to the left in the manner of his own. No, he couldn't do it. That husky leghorn meandering over the sand lent a friendly note to the scene. So Hector, instead of plucking feathers, was encouraged to hunt for more yuca behind the camp.

But time, the foundation of bonds such as the one between Eric and this bird, outlined the division between our sentiments towards it. To me it was merely an acquaintance. No rooster had been added to my culinary equipage, when I first headed for the *Oriente*, to subsequently encourage my heart to fore-stall my stomach. No white leghorn had accompanied me through the few tribulations of my treks to subsequently contaminate the logic of my hunger, or my nerves. On the principle that an offending eye should be plucked out, each

brow searing screech confirmed to my malarial brain that similar dealings with feathers would be in order

Following the increasing paucity of after dinner "tit bits", which had always gone direct to Eric's "pal", the crowing became more and more frequent. I learnt to find relief only by gripping tight handfuls of sand, and found myself waiting for the sound that unconcordantly dived into our ears at regular intervals. Eric felt it. But—he propounded—it was a nice bird and—

So I schemed. I announced that I was hungry and must have "flesh". Of course I wasn't at all, for fever and hunger take different routes.

No, no. Not *that*. Anything but that. Hang on a bit, relief would come, Eric had maintained.

Momentarily I reviewed the inhumanity of my instincts, it was not the leghorn, merely my brain, I told myself.

A truculent screech flew once again around the camp. The bird didn't know it but its death sentence had been sounded. "Meat" immediately became my obsession.

Eric finally gave way, and he coupled revolver practise with the "unpleasant" job in hand.

With the last staccato burst, I rubbed my hands. No more should my aggravated spine shudder beneath the high pitched blasts of such piercing, vociferous expression. No more tautened 'straining' for the noise to come. I blood thirstily congratulated myself on the successful exploitation of my plan. Ha ha, ha ha, ha ha.

Hector served it steaming on the tin plates. It had been sometime since "chicken" had monopolized the menu. His eyes glinted with thoughts of the share that would be his.

Unhappily my inferior refused to co-operate with my former pretence. That evening few genialities passed between Eric and myself.

One morning two pleasing sights raised us from that disheartening coma which had been enveloping us step by step.

Two canoes appeared from up and down stream within an hour of one another. The first brought word from Souder and

the second carried news of the mapping party arriving from the east

Souder was "doubtful" about his Indians. He didn't know whether he could let us have any.

I have referred to the news from him as being one of the "heartening" things of the day. Bad news, yes, but this was one of the few circumstances where it was better than no news at all. The distress of waiting all that time without knowing whether Souder was doing anything, or even bothering to think about us, had been extreme. Had we known earlier what his message had obviously intimated between the lines, rafts might have been built to float with the current towards the 'party' down stream.

Eric's anxiety over their non appearance was naturally greater than the fact that Souder's Indians had never come

And when that 'Napo bound' canoe called in on that same morning and said that, only a day below our sandy camp, George was temporarily recovering from a fever bout, before proceeding up stream with a big canoe and a lot of equipment, it completely erased the despondency that had been creeping over us.

What of the others? The Indian had not been sure, he knew that they had had fever, but he imagined that they were also on their way up-stream.

It was obvious that we should have to return to Napo for men, despite the stonewall attitude of the village. But Eric was anxious to sit tight until at least he had seen George.

During the next two nights my fever wandered in the wrong direction. Now that the canoe had returned, I decided to go back to Napo where the natives had said two doctors had arrived from the West to treat the Indians. I felt that they might have some quinine and could possibly give me an injection.

Leaving Eric with a few roots of yuca which the canoe's crew of two had brought back with them, I began the trip up-stream in the open dug-out. I only remember patches of it as the anophele bug was making a long "field day" out of its sojourn in my body.

There was an occasion when the two men in the canoe had

leapt into the river with a net and made a catch of savage *piranhas*, the fish which are said to be capable of cutting down a horse crossing a river. They were about a foot in length with long savage teeth and the Indians killed them by hitting them behind the head.

I stayed one night at the hut of a river native and was past caring that I shared a basin of *chicha*, and next morning another squashy dish, with his family. "Second hand mastication" I used to call it when watching the Indians tackle the pulpified mess, and this seemed an appropriate label. I ate only to keep a certain amount of strength though the consumption of even a chef prepared Western dish would not have been without effort.

The native settler told me that he had actually seen many *SSabelas* just inside the jungles across the river and that he had had conflicts with them. Somehow his manner in supplying the information did not encourage belief in this story.

After three days, again poling up between those high-folaged river banks, past the whirl pool and up over the rapids with their large white boulders, Sam Souder's river bend hove into sight. It had not come too soon. Even sufficient energy to sit seemed to have fled from my frame.

The canoe banged alongside the rocky ledge, below the slippery path, which wound up a fifty feet mud bank towards Souder's house on the hill.

I slowly pulled myself upright until I was standing unsteadily in the current-slapped dug-out. I motioned one of the Indians to let me "strap-hang" to his neck. But he shrugged, not understanding, and I fell into the river.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE Indian who had paddled down and fished my grateful carcass from the current, delivered me onto Souder's doorstep

Souder in turn poured his own cures down my gullet and doctored me for a week. He was a kind fellow, which fact I have already mentioned and I am grateful to him.

He was living a very lonely life. He had, he said, come to the *Oriente* to die. I laughed at this for the fire in his make up kept him hopping like a cat with singed paws and if anyone ever looked ready for the grave, it was not Sam.

During the seven days in which I occupied his own bedroom and he slept in a veranda hammock, he told me about himself. He was a man who seemed to have packed more wars into his existence than any other I have met. The Spanish American conflict figured as one of the more colourful episodes of his "active" life, which had eased down slowly with a final jolt on the Guayaquil Quito Railway. That was where I had heard his name before. I remembered the friendly references of the American ticket supervisor to Souder's disappearance into the *Oriente*.

"We could never figure out why" the railway official had begun meditatively.

But a little of Souder's conversation had told me the reason. Some people are fortunate enough to make a success of matrimony. He had been one of them and this institution had become the basis of the vital existence which both he and his partner had felt that nothing could shake. But to many of us the summons comes early, so very often without proclaiming its approach, as in Mrs. Souder's case—

Sam had never recovered from it. I realized what he had meant when he had identified his life in the *Oriente* with the expectation of death. He and his wife had never been long

apart and Sam considered that this would continue to be the case.

Yet, as I have said he was a vigorous man. One could not ignore the fact, and I often drew his attention to this—suggesting that he should go back "West". Not just across the Andes, but home to America. I knew his position was such that he could afford it and thus he confirmed. When I put the idea to him his eyes had lighted and he had spoken of his "home State", before he had shrugged his shoulders and guessed that he would "lie down in the *Orient*". But he often spoke about "Home" during my sojourn under his roof, and finally so frequently that I used to wonder——

Yes, it is my belief that the "old United States" as he called them, had not seen the last of its wandering son. And the reason? Somewhere in Ecuador, Sam had a daughter "needin' a proper education"

"And she's just like her mother "

Having heard of the proximity of the expedition, and that Eric was keen to meet him, Carlos Sevilla, who had been speared in his canoe by Ssabelas, made the journey to Souder's home. He was a tall, wiry, olive skinned fellow, good-looking with a black line of a moustache and a dark head of sleekly parted hair.

Sevilla arrived in a khaki shirt and breeches with high black boots. In a civilized drawing-room I very much doubt that he would have lacked feminine attention. But there was nothing effeminate about this muscular fellow who, besides being educated, was intelligent.

He heartily agreed that to be "sheet bound" was the next-thing-to-a living-death and mentioned that he had 'enjoyed' more than a liberal dose of it. I recollected Souder's anecdote of Sevilla's introduction to the *aukar* and not unnaturally I asked him to outline the incident in gory detail.

Repeating what Souder had told me he added that his men had taken an expedition to the scene of the Ssabela attack next day. Laid out on the river bank had been the seven speared bodies of his companions, each corpse being found plentifully stuck with lances, which were also rammed into the mouths

of the victims. Nearby they had found the body of an *auka*.

"So you know something about Ssabelas?" I commented facetiously.

"I am disinclined to learn more," had been his reply.

He had "cultivation plots" on a tributary of the Curaray. The resident Indians had fought off several *auka* attacks.

Sevilla could not stay long enough to wait for Eric's appearance in Napo, and he returned up a tributary to his *bacienda*. Before doing so he invited me to stay a night if ever I went through to Baños. I made a mental note to make this possible, Sevilla had in his possession the ornaments of the dead *auka*.

I noticed that Souder was without his assistant.

"Yep, I had to fire him . . ."

Sam had told this fellow that if sitting around on the veranda all day smoking away the canteen tobacco was the correct interpretation of the duties of an overseer, then he couldn't afford one.

There was nothing vindictive about Souder and he descriptively outlined his disgust for people who were.

His "assistant" had taken petty revenge by damning Sam still more to the villagers, to whom, it transpired, he had constantly boasted of the dupes that he had "put across" his employer. This explained why the soft-drink vendor of Napo had sneered when I had originally inquired about Souder. Sam always liked to be friendly with everyone and the 'poison-trail' left by this young overseer, was preying on his mind.

But when he came in to talk he soon managed to forget these things. Discovering how sociable he really was under that "individualist" exterior, I was even more decided that this lonely *Oriente* should not have been for him. The long discussions that he also had with Eric seemed to have given him a new interest in the "outside".

My strength came tumbling back after a week of his "treatment" and I asked him about a canoe to go back and join the party. "See one of those Napo doctors first", had been his advice, and we had sent word along to the village. But they

of the victims. Nearby they had found the body of an ~~adult~~.

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had gone back to Quito, having taken many photographs of the revolting external effects of *Oriente* diseases.

After a lot of discussion with Sam I reluctantly decided to go also to Quito, as the malarial attacks following on the dysentery had shaken me up. It did not appeal to me to leave Eric at the most colourful part of the show, just when the "party" really were showing up. The intention of tracking the *awas* to their lair was to be the next item on the programme. I only hoped that I should get back from Quito in time.

Sam lent me a camp bed when I left him, for the advantage of sleeping above the level of a marshy trail was obvious. When I had shaken hands and expressed only half my appreciative feelings, I turned down the path towards Napo knowing that I was leaving behind a good man and a hard one. Hardened to the *Oriente*, hard to himself and hard to his Indians. But not *too* hard to them. For he was an "American" and his peons "went on leave".

'All-day' treks through jungles usually amount to the same thing, the expenditure of energy, the desire to "push on" and a 'fatigue-obscuring' vision of the trail. But it stands clearly in my mind, though I prefer to avoid superlatives, that what I did see of it managed to approach my typical conception of a nightmare. Three times in the black slush of that several-day slog to Puyo, I had to combat reptiles who refused to concede "right-of way". Each time I won the bout, although on the third occasion, with eleven feet of black backed, white-stomached serpent giving me the high-powered glance, I had less confidence in my yard long 'snake-swatter' than before. But these incidents all had satisfactory endings and apart from having my toes again sampled by vampires, I had no further altercation with jungle-life, with the exception of the insect variety.

The Baños 'pass', through which I intended to reach the "West" was something over a hundred miles from Napo, whilst Puyo was roughly eighty miles. Speed records over measured distances naturally depend upon the condition of the course. If I trekked at half a mile an hour I usually

congratulated myself. There was the familiar business of leaping from root to root, at which I now felt an old hand, in the wake of the loin-clothed Jibaro carrying my duffle. Having not the slightest interest in anything beyond the fact that he had been instructed in *Quichua* to deposit it in Puyo, this man frequently disappeared from sight. For a whole day I would lose him altogether, but as darkness drew on I would find him waiting by the trail and very soon we would "call it a day."

After four immersions in the violent Napo tributary, on which Sevilla lived, I had eventually arrived at his *hacienda*, which was a two-floored "house" in a clearing dotted with banana trees.

There are some people who possess the subtle ability to cloak a deluge of hospitality under the semblance of ordinary "house hold routine" Sevilla was one of them.

During my overnight stay, he showed me a lengthy 'neck let' of brilliantly green parrot feathers, that had been taken from the shoulders of the dead Ssabela, and several *aukans*, such as Souder possessed.

I met a young Ecuadorian police detective also putting in a night under Sevilla's roof. He was on his way to Tena which I had gathered was the ecclesiastical base of the northern *Oriente*.

It appeared that since I had been in that village the body of a nun had been found in the river. The detective carried a 'pearl handled' revolver and hand-cuffs.

As Tena had a radio link with the outer world I asked him if he would send a message through to Quito, which he agreed to do, but there was a slip between the cup and the lip, and the few important words which I had scribbled on a piece of paper, were never delivered.

The Indians around Sevilla's house killed a boa-constrictor just as the detective and I were heading in opposite directions. The snake took some time to die, and struck at a boy when it had been considered a thoroughly deceased reptile.

Beside the first section of the way to Puyo, hurtling waters rushed over tremendous boulders heading in the direction that

I had come at a speed that seemed to be at least thirty miles per hour

Then I had crossed empty river courses which in the wet season were probably as violent. I stepped down beside those white, rounded boulders, but saw no gold where those waters had only run for part of the year. After this had come a great deal of slushy climbing despite the fact that the Andes were well to my right.

Frequently, when I caught up with my two-legged duffle bag, I would motion for a breather as the fever that had been stayed for a few days was again in the offing. But the Jibaro was usually only acquiescent for a few moments. Then he would shake his head and move off down the trail. When I attempted authoritative argument in the language which he didn't know, he would point eastwards without looking round and mutter the few words which the Spanish tongue seemed to have lent to *Quichua*, "*las infieles las aukas*."

Perhaps among his people this was an effective stimulation to loiterers. But it was possible that the *Ssabelas* *did* come as far west as this. I had heard in Napo that the village was always expecting a raid from them.

It was some time since I had eaten, but this fact in no way gave me concern for my appetite unfailingly went on furlough whenever that 'anophele hug' paid a visit, and the latter appeared quite prepared to take a ride to the 'West', thank you.

But since the conditions of the route many times eclipsed those of the Jondachi morass, I knew that I should have to gulp something to keep the carburettor feeding 'mixture' to the engine.

"Mixture" is right. When it came to the dyspeptical show down, I fell back on more *chicha* from a native hut. There had been no edible alternative.

The woman who eventually produced it had done so with certain misgivings. Fortunately, however, she could speak Spanish.

"Have you any food that I might buy?" I had asked her.

"My husband is away," was the reply and she had edged further inside.

"I have not come to see your husband, I wish to buy food . . ."

"My husband is not here," came a faint reiteration and she had disappeared into the shadows of the interior.

But a few words from the carrier in *Quibus*, who sketchily understood me but with whom I had never been able to converse, seemed to allay certain of her doubts and, encouraged by the sight of a few *centas*, she emerged carrying a gourd. Shortly afterwards as I was about to drink from a clear stream, I came face to face with many reasons for her hesitation. If ever any reflecting water had caught the vision of a mad monk, it was this strip in front of me.

Mirrored in this unrippled creek were the wildest unshaven features, set with red, staring pin points, that I had ever seen. The topce did nothing to lend confidence to the picture and the muddy torn clothing would have been very welcome at the hub of a cabbage field. I should have looked better in a loin cloth. Certainly in the latter garb I could easily have qualified for early tribal initiation, for my skin had turned a greenish-yellow colour, and considering the painted *Ornate* faces that I had seen, I stood a good chance of taking the prize at any jungle-festish.

The sight of another hut at the crest of that 'piggery wallow' was too much---too good to be true.

Unending bog, and two days, had slipped behind me since the consumption of that last dish of *shurba*. Bog, morass, mud, and marshland. It had seemed that these were the only elements of that journey through the foodless jungles.

And as I waded wearily to my thighs, across the black, sloppy patch beneath this high slope, I felt very strangely that my spirit was drowning and that the raised hut up there above me was the straw at which it clutched. If it had not been for some of these spicy hallucinations, for which I could thank my old friend the anophele mosquito, the sheer monotony of constantly struggling out of slush and through the sticky black soil, would have banished that spark of logic which discouraged private debate as to the sum total of it all.

On the United States liner, and in New York, I had been in-

troduced to a pleasing 'new' breakfast dish "HOT CAKES WITH MAPLE SYRUP AND MELTED BUTTER".

And this had been the foremost of the 'visions' which had come to haunt me and stimulate my trek along the trail.

Hot cakes, hot cakes, my brain had reiterated, and continuously I had 'mouthing' in the manner of a St. Bernard eyeing a tea trolley. I determined that when I eventually reached New York, all other matters could run and play with Satan, I should buy an electric hot-cake plate and turn out unending 'tender brown' contributions to my stomach.

But it was paradoxical. Had I actually encountered a plate of "hot cakes" being shipped along that trail, I should have been surprisingly unwell. Such are the contradictory yearnings of pernicious malaria.

At least a dozen people were living in the two-roomed hut which had been built on high stakes above the sloppy ground. Underneath a cow, flicking its tail at the accumulating mosquitos, resignedly peered around the stickiness for grass that wasn't there and finally gazed down into the dark forests already deserted by the setting sun.

Its owners appeared just as pleased to see me, as I was to see them. Marooned as they were above this slippery area it seemed to be quite a "break" for them to encounter a new face even if it was green and shaggy. Or perhaps I am presuming too much. Perhaps, as with Sevilla, it was merely that their conception of sociability knew no bounds.

I made them understand that I needed food, and inquired as to whether it could be obtained quickly. They looked at each other, assured me that it could and, as a stop-gap, produced a 'hot bath' in a tin.

This was most unexpected and I was glad of it because I had "jiggers" in my feet. Seeing me pull them out, by the light of my lamp, their conversation again became animated, and after a short interval I was led through the darkness into another room.

With a great deal of surprise I found a bearded and temporarily bedridden American, an invalid, because he also had an extreme case of "jiggers". This gave our conversation

a galloping start and I was able to doctor my feet with my new friend's "certain cure" He had been a taxidermist and had also collected butterflies for one of the Rothschilds

A gourd of watered milk with a little rice was brought to me warmed It was nourishing, but when I had consumed it, I was unhappy to learn that for days these people had, for some reason or another, been without food The only sustenance that they could obtain was from the cow, and they had forced most of it on me

The American shrugged "Yes, they like to see a stranger—few gringos come near here," was his explanation

He advised me to cover my feet and to tie my camp net tightly during the night as there were bats about When I told him that they had already taken a dray or two of Scottish blood and asked how a bat was able to manage this without awakening its victim, he explained that by fanning the toes lightly with their wings, they could anæsthetize the punctured skin

With his own feet bound for protection from further "jiggers", this bunter of *Oriente* fauna found it difficult to stand on them Yet I was awakened in the middle of the night by a gun blazing off beside my head With a torch on the barrel this old man had shot a rabbit from the window Next day I learnt how far its meat could go There were four whole gourds of gruel and still it seemed that a complete rabbit bung up "to dry"

An intelligent, generous fellow, this American. And he had often been in London It was strange that I should have found him 'bed bound' in this wilderness, for the moment, anyhow, one of the world's forgotten men

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE 'owner-chauffeur', who probably had not paid off the last instalment, ran his eyes in detail over my attire, and looked several times at my feet, before unlocking the gates to Eden. Had he possessed any covering or old newspapers, he would certainly have lined the interior. But I was past caring what he thought as I dragged my wet *raggedness* inside. It was only when I relaxed into the massive cushioned seats of this monster Studebaker saloon and studied the pertly flash American wear of the driver and his pal that I realized my sudden link with civilization.

I almost felt afraid of it. Perhaps "self-conscious" is more appropriate. A weakness pervaded my stomach on considering the normal hygienic standards of civilian life and the labour ahead necessary to evolve a silk purse from the sow's ear that I had become.

My whiskers had sprouted in disconcerting shades from coal black to ginger and I knew that never at any time could that scalp matting of dried 'jungle-mure' be identified with the words 'Crowning Glory'.

Gangs of horses in each cylinder snorted in response to the Indian behind the wheel, and the ponderous automobile churned away the freshly-cut trail with its bottom gear.

The Rio Pastaza still slashed on towards the Amazon several hundred feet below to the left, as it had for the last thirty or forty miles from Puyo.

Puyo, the home of a chieftain of "head-shrinkers" Puyo, where I had seen barefooted, cotton bloused, raven haired Indian women blood thirstily fall upon a feebly kicking butchered cow Puyo, the home of men who are rarely in residence

My remaining impressions were of fifteen or sixteen large huts, surprise at seeing a telegraph station "so far from home"

(despite the fact that I had known of its existence) and a chance meeting with two young Germans on the river, one tall and dark, the other stocky and blond

They were trying to "settle" on an untamed jungle slope. As neither of them seemed entirely happy about it, I had asked them why they had left Germany for such an extreme life. One of them had looked at me with pursed lips, and I had understood.

And now as the roar of the black Studebaker eclipsed that of the passing Agoyan Falls, I thought of the narrow rock hewn path in the perpendicular walls behind me which had partly crumbled away in last night's storm. Until the trail could be cleared I had stumbled from the darkness into a dry hut to sleep amongst twenty-eight Indians who had all shared a curiosity to study the *gringo* in somnolent repose.

Food! A meal! Hot cakes! When I had seen the car (the result of a wire from Puyo to Ambato) along the track several miles east of Baños, these had been the only concerns of my mind. I was certain this time that the needs of head and abdomen coincided.

A "roll down to Rio" might have its points, but a lively arrival in Baños behind a scared Indian driver can also be appreciated after a sojourn in the *Oriente*.

At 7 a.m. the gravel of the 'sun lit' Villa Alemana yard crackled and catapulted from beneath the wire wheels of this outsize in motor cars. The fact that I arrived this way instead of with a swag on my back curbed any apprehensions which might have arisen in Frau Von Hartrott at my doubtful appearance. Without waiting for more than a cursory explanation she flung an "abracadabra" at the house-boy and in a moment conjured steaming coffee, hot toast, butter and marmalade. I made a mental note to 'remember' this good lady before sharing the common end.

My intuition that one cannot be hungry with fever hardly seems to fall in line with the fact that I sent out a second SOS for toast. But the "anophele bug" must have been taking time off. A "Blue Gillette" blade, hot water, and an invasion into Voo Hartrott's wardrobe played a big part in the next hour. And, as if fate had meant to be kind and temporarily

take my mind right off the *morass* now behind, I emerged to find another Briton breakfasting in the sun.

He said he was from "Mahn-chester" and when I asked him *why* he was so far from home, he remarked that he had "seen it coomin' . . ."

"It?"

"The blewdy war . . ."

He had sold a big business and "got owt"

"What's next on your programme?"

He pointed to the world's greatest mountain range

"Ah'll take a couple of pahk mewles an' settle across thow-se . . ."

"Do you know anything of the conditions there?"

"Lahd, A've got it all plahoned . . ."

The grey-clad figure in the 'pyjama like' uniform crept again into the shaded bedroom of that Quito hotel

"*Señor . . . Señor . . .*"

He was bending beside the bed with a brown paper parcel in his arm, ready to gabble into my ear

"Yes? What? Go away—?"

"But, *Señor*, this time something special . . ."

"All right then, but hurry up—"

The close-cropped head of the room servant bowed lower as he looked at the door and unwrapped the parcel that he carried.

"Very, *very* cheap!"

"A bottle? Scent—?"

I rose up to focus my eyes more clearly on what he had brought. The *criado* began his sales-talk.

"Very fine perfume."

"I wouldn't even sprinkle that on a horse, where did you get it?"

"Oh—"

"Never mind, go away."

"But *very* fine perfume, *Señor* . . . all the hotel boys use it . . ."

"Get out."

"Wait, *Señor*, wait—"

The high 'Cherokee-type' cheekbones projected further as this amateur "bootlegger" unfolded more of the brown paper to peddle further of his wares.

"Our!"

"Señor, SEÑOR . . .!"

The fellow practically dumped the whole parcel on the bed in his effort to unwrap it quickly. In a minute he had found what he sought and held it under my nose in cupped hands. A small black face peered from between his thumbs.

"See, Señor . . . a *tsantsa* . . ."

In turn he produced three more, with a foot of glossy black hair hanging to the crown of each. About ten lengths of small cord hung from the lips of one "shrunken head", and in every case these had been drawn together. I could imagine the reception that would have been accorded such a trophy by my maiden aunts in London. It was almost worth making a deal. But a law is a law and I had no wish to jeopardize the good work of the party still in the *Oriente*.

The *tsantsa* carried my mind back there to the Jibaro chief, and as the hotel room boy, seeing that there was again to be "no sale", gloomily gathered up his ghoulish merchandise, I wondered what secrets the hut of old Severa had held. He had been away when I called at Puyo. Sonny eventually told me in New York that the Jibaro had 'shown' him many shrunken animal heads but had put nothing further on display.

Now that I was alone again I relaxed and my mind, gradually finding itself unchecked, ran on—ran away—ran not—

Puyo—Severa—Ssabelas—Puyo—how much further?—hot cakes—mud—mud—*ebiba*—mud—

Again it was the old "anophele" back at the fold.

Dr Carlos Andrade Marin who treated me advised an early departure from the country. There was "no chance", he said, of going back to the *Oriente*—

"Unless you want to stay there," he had grinned.

Well, I was keen to see Ssabelas, but not sufficiently so to choose their country for my spiritual descent into Old Nick's kingdom. So I radio'd Eric to this effect and decided to catch the *Santa Clara* sailing from Guayaquil in three days' time. My

energy was coming back and I watched my bags packed into the luggage compartment of the train with comparatively high spirits. It had suddenly struck me that I missed the London from which I had been away for so long and also I was anxious to see a little more of the United States. Furthermore the *Santa Clara* was one of the Grace Liners that called at Havana. Life was assuming a very pleasant aspect. Ever since the vitality of rumba music had spread to Europe, Cuba had paraded across my visional imagination.

It was just "on time" I swung up to the observation platform as the husky little engine prepared to jerk the carriages away. The moment came and the crowd drew back.

But these things suddenly meant nothing to me. I could only appreciate one damnable fact. I HAD IT AGAIN!

A final tug of the train reacted all the way down the line of couplings. The *Observation Car* suddenly bounded forward. I fell off the end.

The station became deserted as I sat on my haunches beside the fence dimly seeing the last wisp of smoke drift away.

I felt like a fool.

Always allowing a little bug to bowl me over—first the river, and now a railway track. There was not much comfort in the fact that it was probably the same "wog" that had laid out Pizarro's expedition of four thousand Indians. And now most of the taxis were leaving the station yard. I caught the last straggler, and returned to bed.

"Make it a double dose, I can catch that train at Riobamba."

"Well there's no chance of it in this condition."

The American luxury liner, *Cuba* and *New York*, seemed suddenly a long way off. I took the "shot" and slept until Mann called again at eight that evening.

I realized my position. All my luggage was on its way to the coast and there wasn't another boat for a week.

"That train will be in Riobamba until the morning, Dr ——"

"Cut the idea right out."

"But you can give me another shot and I'll scrounge an over-coat—"

The doctor thought for a minute.

"Perhaps if I could find a closed car "

It was a Ford "Vee-eight" saloon The driver had no money for petrol so I paid him in advance and about nine o'clock we sought the 'Riobamba' road

"Lights," a Quito policeman had shouted on the outskirts of the town

"Why *lights*," I asked the driver who merely shrugged in reply, but as we moved over the city limits, I discovered that the head lamps showed practically no more than a glimmer

The long and short of this journey was that ten miles outside Quito I climbed out of a telescoped car, into a water ditch. On the road lay the warm corpse of an ox.

At eleven that night, I set out once more from Quito This time in the most sturdy looking car that I could find, with a powerful beam that cut the darkness for a considerable distance in front of the car By 4 a.m. we had reached Riobamba

Many people were leaving to catch the *Santa Clara* and the Hotel Metropolitano was full So I approached the one to which I had pursued a shrieking tout on my very first arrival, and here I managed to win an hour's sleep

At daybreak both hotels emptied to fill the trains that were straining to leave for the north and south I was surprised to find Carl and Mont among the passengers The latter was also catching the *Santa Clara*, Carl was to stay another fortnight. Neither of them said that they had very much to report. The rains had continued The lake in the shoulder of Cerro Hermoso had disclosed nothing

This latter fact coincided with my propounded ideas With the Valverde trail taking a different bearing to our Cerro Hermoso route, and several mountains in a position to call themselves "three peaked", this "exploration of the legend" had been a 'long shot' I had also seen quite a number of lakes in the Llanganatis which had looked as if they could have been artificially created by the diversion of a cascade. So that for the present, anyhow, the 'Treasure of the Incas' lay where Valverde had left it But I knew that Eric would give the

legend a run for its money, after his dealings with the Ssabclas

"But the bank sent me this and *this* confirming it . . ."

The Guayaquil official smiled with polite tolerance

"Yes, yes, but that refers to the amount that was forwarded to Quito"

This time I counted to five only .

"I arranged through London that deposits for similar sums were to be made—and held—both here and in the Quito bank, and look, they have notified me to say that it was done."

But officialdom having come to a decision prepared to alienate itself from further discussion It cared not in the least that hotel bills, provisions, *Oriente* transport, cars, mules, medicinal and other expenses had ravenously absorbed the packets of sucre once owned by this captious fellow outside "the cage", to the extent of leaving him only a dollar or two Officialdom had blandly closed the interview, and that was that

The British consul seemed surprised at my 'emerald' bue. I outlined to him my financial predicament and explained that I had wired Quito unsuccessfully four times

Acting on his advice I approached the bank in a certain manner, with success But this 'success' came late My lost deposit was subsequently forwarded to the New York branch some time afterwards without explanation, apology, or notification

My last few sucre were spent wiring London to make a deposit in Havana. Finally, rattling a couple of *centavos* in my pocket, I took the Grace Line launch and chugged out to the *Santa Clara* in mud river.

CHAPTER XXIX

"WOTTA block—"

Which ever way you looked at it that's just what the Hudson River was. If, of course, you could look at it. My breath blurred the windows and it needed a constant handkerchief rub on the pane to see a thing. And what did I see? Yes, just what—?

Was that the Statue of Liberty? No, a ship, I think, but what other fool ship would try to break through the field of ice that was New York harbour?

Thick ropes of snow dashed on the outside pane of this "deck veranda". I knew that I could stand just one minute more before turning into an icicle myself. Or I could avoid this by retreating into the 'heat-conditioned' forward lounge. I wondered which would be the chilliest choice. With every retirement of a would-be harbour gazer, unlimited cubic feet of arctic air flooded the warm interior of the ship. No one thanked him, and looks could approach lower temperatures than any of the below-zero blasts that swept around the decks.

BELOW ZERO! The 'tabloids', which had been brought aboard at quarantine, and were being sold amongst the 'thin-blooded' huddling inside, screamed that it was "SEVENTEEN BELOW".

I rubbed hard on the glass and again took in what I could. The *Santa Clara* was beside the tall castles of commerce near the Battery. Though why on their *right*? But distance was deceptive and she was gradually easing round. I imagined that the ship was manoeuvring away from the force of the biggest Hudson ice hunks which were slowly moving down-river.

Now the Battery had slipped over to the other side of the bows, I thought, I couldn't be sure. Yes, it had, and we were

making way against the heavy frozen blocks. A ferry boat, travelling across to New Jersey, left a thin black trail which appeared to quickly freeze over.

What a different New York to the one that I had left, with its sharp grey lines standing out against the cloudless blue sky, months before I had travelled down harbour on the top deck of the *Santa Barbara*, that sailing day, to catch the first cool breeze that I had felt in New York. Now all the icy draught that I required, plus somebody else's share, had numbed my first six skins. I would certainly pay for the carelessness of leaving my heavy coat in London, before I could get another in New York.

The seventh skin was beginning to weaken and, having had enough, I retreated.

Seven reporters had come aboard down harbour, each demanding a personal story on the expedition.

This meant repetition, which unfailingly dismays me. I could see a batch of them in the lounge around Mont, recording his Andean activities. Instead of introducing another polar blast and letting myself in for a similar interview, I walked to the rear saloon. Through the deck glass I could see ice-blocks all over the hatches. Amongst them the ship's cat was picking its way.

The fellow in front of me was having a tough time as he faced the cross-examination of three immigration officials. He was South American and accompanied by his wife. When my passport had run the blockade and won its "stamp", he told me that this was his first big step away from "the *hacienda*". I gathered that his life had allowed little contact with things urban.

Six official eyes bored into him.

"And another thing—how much money havya?"

"Senores? Cuantos *duros*? Tres mil solamente—"

"What's that in American?"

"He says be has only thirty thousand—"

"Thirty thousand *dollars*?"

The high powered scrutiny from across the table wavered and the three sets of eyes dilated. This was a language which

their owners understood. The Americans dug elbows into each other's paunch jocularly——

‘Why, there ain’t that much money in the world!’

Officialdom took some time to recover from its joke

“Have ya gotta friend ter meet ya? No? Not with thirty thousand ‘iron men’? Doncha know someone here? Yeah? Well you’ll hafta tell’m ta come”

But when I was locating my baggage on the wharf I saw the tormented one strolling about unleashed. Fortunately money had awaited my arrival in Cuba, but no New York official had made any reference to my pocket book. Perhaps I had only metaphorically skidded into America beneath the shroud of genuinity following the exposure of that Latin’s assets. Anyhow, nobody plied me with tinctured riddles and I crossed an inobturate threshold to the Promised Land.

The avenues of New York City lay beneath eight or nine inches of snow. Heaps of ice blocks stood piled beside the pavements, in some cases to a height of ten feet. The cab-driver who skated me along to the Barbizon Plaza, a forty floor hotel over looking Central Park, had been practising an “act”

“The front treads are good, they hold,” he said, “but I slap on the brakes and—ask me what happens!”

“You tell me”

“The back slings around like that, see——?”

“All right, then ‘slap’ them off again”

But Sammy Rosenheimer, whose identification snapshot and licensed number scowled at the rear seat, had not always enjoyed icy roads to gambol his toy upon, like these

“Stranger myself,” he enlightened me, practising an unnecessarily malicious broadside around an Overhead stanchion “California——”

But animated motion on frozen roads and I were strangers, and I put this fact to him, descriptively outlining my recent “automobile-cum-ox” party in South America

“Well, what thahell couldya expect witha dago,” he threw over his shoulder “Ya safe in this cab, brother——”

We drew in beside the Fifty-eighth Street hotel entrance.

"Ya stayin' in N'York, pal?"

"Somewhere warm——"

"Yeah, we've certainly collected our packet—but say, why don't you Limeys get wise to the West, 'stead uv sittin' around here?"

"What do you mean?"

"See Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California—that's my home—they all get plenty heat."

"California? That's about three thousand miles away, isn't it?"

"Sure, I know, but what's three thousand——?"

"It's a long way."

Sammy Rosenheimer shrugged tolerantly

"Yeah, mebbe it is, but listen, us Americans knows you Limeys. We knows whatya eat, whatya like, how them English dooks live—us fellers read——"

Aha, Sammy read! Appearances could certainly belie their owners

My bags were filing through the swing doors in the custody of "bell hops". The extravagant figure that was the 'Door-man' fidgeted with 'customer is right' patience. But the Californian driver's words were still carrying him to ecstatic heights

"And wodda Limeys know of us Americans?—nothin' Woddya know of the country?—nothin' So I'll tellya—go out West—get way out—the West has some lovely people——"

But he broke off suddenly and released his brakes grinning, apparently considering me stony ground. With an 'I'll be seein' ya,' his autobahn monster rolled down the icy slope to Sixth Avenue

Yet Sammy's silent surmise had been wrong. The seed had sown. Why should I shiver in New York, when the "West" had warmth and "lovely people"?

Digging my atoms under the loose, soft sand of the artificial beach beside that oversize in lavish swimming pools, I gazed from under a towel through screwed eyes, at the peaceful splendour of green lawns and palms. Amongst these colourful

surroundings ping pong was being played in the shade of trees and competition on the archery range nearby, with its big rainbow 'bull's-eyes' contrasting vividly against the bright green grass, was keen

What must be one of the most magnificent 'country' hotels in the world spread its cream-coloured 'Spanish' architecture in the middle of this immense groomed acreage, and rose like a palace above its surroundings. The vast "estate" included an aerodrome with asphalt runways beyond which white-puffs from a clay pigeon shoot bit the sun light

I wanted to seek out the distant hand of Sammy Rosenheimer and shake it hard and long for its owner's suggestion of a Californian sojourn. I wanted to tell him that here I was out West at Del Monte enjoying myself more than I had ever occasion to do before. I wanted to say, what he might not have understood, that Californian sunshine was putting my pet microbe on a rack. This 'ultra violet' had licked my "anophele bug" in the stomach, and had laid it out for ten—

Del Monte! What a place it was. Marshall Steel and I had motored down from 'Frisco in three hours, arriving in time for lunch at the gargantuan restaurant of the hotel which suggested the governmental banquet hall of some Latin empire. That is if any Latin empire could have achieved the special 'Del Monte' atmosphere of its interior

When I had absorbed the sun's ray to the point of dizziness and immersed my parched body again in the large blue pool, we drove to nearby toll gates marking the commencement of the Seventeen Mile Drive, which wound through woods, mountains and frequently alongside the sea. My impressions were of amazing bird and animal life whilst against this unspoilt country background were golfers, deer, seals, film-stars and pelicans all within a few hundred yards of one another

And speaking of seals, I saw two swimming by. We didn't stop. Six seals passed on, dipping in and out of the turquoise Pacific, and heading south. We stopped, then motored on again. Driving out of the woods once more, we found the sea bobbing with many hundred shapes, black and grey.

'Seals again?"

"Seaweed."

But I am long-sighted—

Again the drive took us back amongst the forest homes of California's affluent. Charles Chaplin has a retreat there. And now the twisting Chevrolet coupé hummed back again towards the swelling blue of the ocean

But what a strange noise that was! A football match? hounds, perhaps? People—?

No Just seals—seals—more seals—lots of seals—seals pouring into that semi sheltered bay between the small rock islands—seals here, there, seals everywhere—

Whiskered heads manœuvred like nobby periscopes about the surface of the water. A thousand soccer balls seemed to be floating in the foam around the two islands that accommodated every slithering body that could keep its grip. A seal convention. We were told that it was permanent.

Slapping their wet flippers on the rocks, these amphibious mammals were shouting each other down, all intent on bettering their vantage points

Whew! What an aroma!

The massed breath of a myriad carnivorous threats

And within a radius of three miles of this odd spot were five golf courses. In this estate with its hundreds of miles of bridle paths, there were two Country Clubs, polo fields and fishing

How did we feel about all these surroundings with their continuous and sensuous warmth? Good? Yes, and like spring chickens, for after all, we were at Del Monte, California.

The Old Spanish mission at Carmel, with its white stone tower, typical of many centres of worship in the Andes, so many thousand miles away, marked the end of the Chevrolet's spontaneous dash down the coast. An Irish priest showed us over the old religious centre, producing Spanish relics of Madonnas and implements. He made a point of drawing our attention to the Mission door. How many centuries could we pin to it? We took the bait and saw several hundred years in that apparently hand-worn wood. The Catholic father chuckled at the success of his fool proof jest. It was six months old, he

said, and they were working on it to create an even more aged effect.

At a "sea-food restaurant" in old Monterey, where Spanish Indians walked the streets, I dealt with steaming clams whilst Marshall consumed abalone. This is a Californian mollusc, which when eaten is served on its five inch 'ear-shaped' shell lined with mother-of-pearl.

South of Santa Cruz were a series of 'cider farms' with big jars of apple juice in all stages of fermentation. The road-side shacks displaying these for cheap sale, readily offered a sample mugful of the cootents of each cask. When we stopped, it became a most hospitable affair.

Santa Cruz itself is a seaside hohiday town with "Loop-the-Loop" machines and a "Giant Dipper". I looked at this once and remembered Cooey Island's "Cyclone". No, I preferred to keep the clams and cider.

California has several "valleys-of-the-giants". These of course are the "Redwood" districts, though the State is also famous for its firs, and spruce. Amoogst its "big trees" is the "General Sherman"—thirty six feet in diameter—and the "Grizzly Giant", three thousand eight hundred years old. Think of it! Have we anything to eclipse that record?

On the way to Del Monte we had passed through a redwood prescrve, and lunched at its immense log restaurant, down the middle of which a river, with trout, pouzed over rocks. Beside this stood the tables. Yes, a river and a waterfall actually in a restaurant and bordered by giant trees growing inside the roof. Between these, ferns splayed plentifully and to cross from one side of this restaurant to the other there was a "Japanese" humped bridge. Lunch varied in price from six shillings to eight and the name of the restaurant was called Brookdale Lodge. Poems on its luncheon tables offered greet-ings to patrons:

"Hail guest we know not whom thou art,
If friend we greet thee hand and heart,
If stranger such no longer be,
If foc our love shall conquer thee."

The "love" of Brookdale Lodge has also conquered film stars. Two internationally known actresses dissected "Rainbow Mountain Brook Trout" at tables on either side of me.

At Big Basin chipmunks rushed out from the "Giants" and practically climbed into the car. They came for peanuts. Blue jays waited about to pick up any that the chipmunks dropped, and a deer nosed forward readily, anticipating a sandwich.

Stanford University at Palo Alto, California, is the most beautiful that I have ever seen. Out of intensely "dry" country it has torn fertility for its bright green lawns, splayed palms, and clipped hedge trees. The lay-out of the exquisite whole appears to have been arranged and perfected with complete disregard for expense. It has a "village" of white fraternity and sorority "houses" shaded by peaceful leafy trees and nearly every building carries an insignia of Greek lettering on the door. There is a massive, elliptical, 'white' football stadium seating ninety thousand.

The Varsity itself, which flavours in every way of Mexico, is—as far as I can remember—"done" in a shade of cream-pink stone. If that sounds too hideous let me assure the reader that it is not.

We parked the car and walked under "The Arches" which spread around the main buildings. The flagged paving beneath them held a line of metal plaques let into the floor, one for every year of the Varsity's existence. The Arches lead round the campus to the Memorial Church on a facet of which are coloured frescoes of Christ and his disciples offering supplication to heaven. Above the paintings stands a stone cross.

It was the many beautiful frescoes and the stained windows which held my attention more than the magnificent rounded architecture of the interior. It is worth a visit to Stanford solely to see this chapel.

There was the Mausoleum backed by stone columns and guarded by two 'Egyptian' sphinxes in a 'palm shaded' corner of the gardens and, elsewhere, a delicately sculptured monument to the winged Angel of Grief.

The Stanford Union Building, with twin "Spanish" minarets and hedge-creepers growing above the arched porch to the third floor, faced a drive and small patches of clipped lawn.

The Herbert Hoover Building, with its modernistic sharp rectangular outlines, allowed entrance between two massive conical hedge-trees. Stanford's beauty perhaps defeats its own object. There are wings awaiting the mind that lends itself to these delightful surroundings.

THE MOLLY DOOD VOL

11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

I LEFT ENGLAND

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THE HOLLYWOOD BOOM



CHAPTER XXX

FROM the 'soft lighted' circular sky lounge of San Francisco's tallest hotel, the Empire, I looked through the dusk over the brilliant electrical kaleidoscope of the city. Away up on the steep and expensive Nob Hill to my left glowed the fashionable "Mark Hopkins". Towards the harbour in front of me the city buildings gradually grew in steps and stairs past Union Square, where I was staying at the "St Francis", to be finally dominated by the structures of the Shell Company and Standard Oil. 'Frisco's main thoroughfare Market Street, slightly to my right, cut through the metropolis to the harbour quay. On Market Street, by day, I had seen women 'picket' department stores with cries of "This store unfair to organized labour". Patrons of these stores had been booed, there had been scuffles with the police and I had heard the remark of a passerby to a woman picket—

"You're being trained for a revolution."

"Is that so?" had been the pert, inevitable reply

Strings of lights clung about a shadowed monster that ran above the waterfront to a black patch at "mid harbour", in line with the Market Street quay. I knew that this dark giant, topped by four red air beacons, was San Francisco's pride and joy—"The Bridge"—and the black patch was Yerba Buena (or "Goat Island" as some prefer to know it) the 'stepping-stone' to Berkeley, across the harbour.

That is to say the bridge is in two sections and Yerba Buena Island links them both. The "suspension cables", a yard in diameter, are composed of thousands of small gauge wires. The bridge has two traffic levels, one for commercial vehicles and the railway. This of course is not to be confused with the smaller, though equally famous "Golden Gate" which bridges the mouth of the harbour.

I stared across the city's illuminations to the dimness sur-

rounding Yerba Buena. There was a further patch to its left. Another island? Yes. An artificial one that the city had constructed on shallow water sandbanks

"All right, go down and build an island in the harbour suitable to carry a World's Fair"

What a headache this must have given someone! And this year (1939) the "Fair" is on

Berkeley, which supports the switch back maze of "over-roads" sharing its end of the 'Frisco Bridge, is the home of the University of California, Helen Jacobs and Donald Budge. The city, chiefly residential, is a moderate edition of the Olympia Home Exhibition, and appeared to enjoy considerable sunshine. This is not always the case with California, the area of which is more than three times that of England and runs seven hundred and seventy miles north and south. The University of California has been heavily endowed by Hearst the newspaper magnate (who possesses a fantastic "empire", which includes a castle, at San Simeon) and others. It certainly shows it

Varied impressions of Berkeley flooded my mind and glazed my eyes as I faced its darkened though twinkling horizon—the white Varsity "Tower", the Grecian amphitheatre presented by Mrs Hearst, (mother of the magnate) the "*smorgesbord*" "help-yourself" restaurant with its homely Norwegian orderliness—

The kindness of two Berkeley families pervaded my appreciative senses as I dwelt on the fact that 'hospitality' had taken on a new meaning in my life. I thought of that all-day drive to the Mount Diablo country club with its old Mexican *hacienda*. I thought of the trips here and there on which nothing had been spared so that a "Briton" might learn that there *was* another world 'beyond Brighton'. And a very pleasant one. I never ceased to wonder at the casual way Americans lent me automobiles and if I didn't borrow many it was only because my national instincts objected

"Don't take a street-car, grab the roadster——" or "He has a car—drop down and pick it up"

The "sky lounge" Chinese flower girl, with floral pyjamas and blossoms in her dark wavy hair, interrupted my thoughts as she offered me a buttonhole. These Oriental beauties are to be seen in most of the hotels, with their shoulder trays of

exotic Californian blooms 'Frisco has quite a large Chinatown, on the side of a hill, in a busy district——

My mind also drifted to the local Japanese gardens where costumed 'Children of the Sun' wander on the flagged paths between lily ponds and over curved bridges, and where I had taken Japanese tea with wafers—tea that had appeared to be 'lighter' yet stronger than Chinese blends

The circular bar of the Hotel Empire was filling rapidly for "cocktail hour" I thought how the architects of Shunar would have coveted this tower which rose so high above the city?

My view through the glass panel took in the tall ladders of light asserting 'Frisco's claim of being the Manhattan of the West. So this was the intriguing city which had arisen from the shambles of the 1903 earthquake. This in fact was what the spirited survivors had meant when they had cried

"We'll build a new and better San Francisco "

About an island there is mystery and fascination And, if it is a Pacific Island——?

To think of New York still in the grip of ice-blocks For again I was soaking up the powerful essence of the sunshine. Once more stimulating ocean breezes slid across my sand warmed body. This time I lay on the beach at Santa Catalina Island forgetting Indians, forgetting mosquitoes, forgetting the mud and filth of unending jungle trails My world at present included none of these things Dictators might be surprising nations, 'Gilt Edged' could possibly be in the last stages of collapse, but at the moment I made it no concern of mine I was back with my Pacific—my sun hit, romantic, in vigorating Pacific which for years had broken the routine of my everyday life

Catalina, twenty miles from the Californian coast in the middle of that blue expanse will, I hope, never be anything more than it is Thousands of wild goats, left centuries ago by Spanish explorers, roam the wild interior There is boar hunting and, in season, quail Surefooted Western horses can be hired to take you through hills and cañons far from the

beaten track where there are hundreds of rare birds, colourful, queer, and exotic——

The season had just closed, but giant tunas (or tunny) had been seen and many 'big game' fishermen were on the island. It was on Catalina that I found America's second seal rockery.

There are small shops offering Island pottery, shellwork, and other curios. A Mexican or 'Early Californian' flavouring pervades the tourist area of this entirely different world. But the visitor is more inclined to dress the part and blend with the settings of this romantic spot than cheapen it with "noisy vacationing". Each day at Catalina one saw additions to the fleet of yachts which found peaceful anchorage in the 'harbour'. An absorbing attraction was the study of weirdly fascinating ocean floor life seen from the sea windows of glass-bottomed boats.

If you stay long enough on Catalina it gets you. I had always thought that one could tire of any 'Happy-carefree-life-get-back-to-nature' plan, but when I recently heard a British army major speak of retiring to Tahiti, I didn't scoff smugly. I remembered how hard it had been to drag myself back from the tropical palmed sanctuary of Santa Catalina Island to a crazy world again. Yes, I mean crazy. I went direct to Hollywood.

Arriving with a relaxed open mind and expecting half only of the 'perfect world' which is thrust upon celluloid and shipped in cans to England, I found none of it. Except perhaps in the matter of food, which everywhere in America is varied, *clean*, good, and —contrary to all English rumours on the subject—surprisingly cheap.

Hollywood, a suburb of Los Angeles, is in effect a stepped up "home exhibition" with no architectural restrictions. But a very quick glance suggests a mushroom settlement of three-ply thrown together and white-washed. A strangely quiet atmosphere over hangs the whole town. Probably because the white bungalows are set widely apart by lawns with few fences and, furthermore, distances from one part of the town to another are great. Everyone has a car which can be bought "ex works" at usually half the price for which the same

American make is sold in England. Even so, in Hollywood quite high prices are realized on *second hand* cars

Three main boulevards running through the town are known as "Hollywood", "Sunset" and "Santa Monica" "Hollywood Boulevard" represents the shopping district, fashionable restaurants like the "Vendome" and "Trocadero" are located on "Sunset", and "Santa Monica" boasts of fruit markets that cover a block

As we know searchlights announce world premieres or the opening of a bucket shop. It is all the same to the show instincts of the town. There must be searchlights. One finds 'air liners' turned into petrol stations, restaurants looking like derby hats, "bakeries" in the shape of windmills and an Egyptian and Chinese theatre. In the flagged court of the latter are cement-prints of the hands and feet of celebrated stars and, in the case of Joe E Brown, a mouthprint

From beneath giant lettering forming the word HOLLYWOOD-LAND, erected against a section of the mountain range that encircles Los Angeles, I looked down on broadcasting stations and a sea of the same inevitable whiteness and palm tree lined avenues. At the busiest traffic section of Hollywood were a few tall buildings. On the day that I arrived I had seen a wounded policeman leave one of them and sit on the pavement holding his torn shoulder. All ambulances in Hollywood scream and with such a proclamation one had carried away an expiring gunman (who, intent on shooting his harassed wife, had tracked her to a lawyer's office) and the body of a second policeman, who had taken part in subsequent gun play.

Not forming part of Hollywood, but close to Beverly Hills is Westwood Village. If in any way it could be normally termed a "village", it is at least a very smart and fashionable one. There are several dress salons here and many Californians augment their wardrobe from them.

The restaurants in Westwood Village are attractive, quiet and again inexpensive. The roofs of some of them are open and Spanish fountains splash languidly in the offing.

Houses in Beverly Hills are white editions of those that one might see anywhere in England or elsewhere. But the fact

that their lawns are unfenced (though occasionally hedged), and usually bordered by two species of palm trees within a few yards of each other, makes residence there seem attractive.

In such a part of Beverly Hills, I called on an ex British officer friend of Eric, who has risen to heights as a film actor. His home, again done in the usual white style, was 'set well back from the drive by a garden lawn. Behind the house in another lawn was a swimming pool and beside it a private 'English pub', a very good imitation of the real thing.

He was just off to New York to be initiated into some club hearing his name.

"Long way," he said, "they want to adopt me—lot of rot—"

I noticed a great many pseudo "English accents" amongst the film aspirants, but my friend after many years away from home happens to have retained a normal cultured voice. Accompanied by his wife and small daughter, I dined with him afterwards at the "Vendome" and was surprised to hear one of England's leading stage and film actors speaking hundred per cent American, at the next "table booth". The attractive inflections and manner of emphasis of the American voice are easily absorbed.

My general impression was that Hollywood, despite its searchlights, is a very quiet, ordinary little town which the unflagging energy of studio propaganda departments has somehow managed to sell to the world as a second Mecca.

From its patchy, 'ribbon-development' appearance it was difficult to appreciate the fact that fortunes are squandered daily inside the walled estates that are the film studios. There are not many of them actually in the suburb, but Radio Pictures, Paramount and Columbia still have their lots in Hollywood.

I was taken into two of them. The process of "getting in" (in both cases) consisted of stepping from the street into a bare waiting room, giving your name, which was referred to someone at the other end of a telephone, and then, at the "okay" signal, pushing through a swing door into the world beyond. There are usually many people around the "entrance-desks" and the regular employees march in and out, so that if the

BRUCL SETON, VALENTINO'S DOUBLE

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'film struck' cared to "crash the studios" I should imagine that it would be easy, despite the fact that there are police inside. These "cops" are ever watchful for cameras and pounce on any that they see being taken near open air filming.

Inside there are usually many square buildings called "stages". These are the *actual studios* and there can be as many as twenty in the grounds of one company. Usually they are a dull yellow colour because this photographs as "white", and real white dazzles the camera when the outside walls are used as backgrounds. They photograph well in this "buff" colour, which approaches the shades of make-up used by movie actors.

Wild-eyed Punjabis roamed the grounds of one studio. These were actually "hundred per-cent Californians" in flowing robes and artificial whiskers, "crowd working" for a "North west frontier" film. In one studio I watched a music maestro supervise the blending of recently orchestrated strains of music at a 'mixing panel'. This resembled the radio-room of an ocean liner and enabled the experimenters to soften the harshness of any particular instrument being played.

Inside one of these film "estates" there were pieces of every thing that make up the artificial world of the screen. Half a church slapped up with rough wood, and painted to deceive the eye, was propped next to the ramparts of 'bits' of a "castle". There was an "English river" passing beside both sets, a fake garage, a "gold rush" saloon bar, a section of a big American city that could have been labelled as New York or any other metropolis. It was all very fine and calculated to deceive the cinema goer, but one could not help realizing how cynical "camera-crews" must become with nothing ever actually being what it seems.

And the extremist affluent life played on the gilded interior 'sets' from dawn ('be ready made-up and on the set by eight') until occasionally late hours at night, must create strange values in the minds of the hard working actors and actresses. And in fact in the mind of all star gazers. For there amidst such surroundings new constellations have appeared—the lines of Venus have been re-interpreted—and Valentino was 'born' to a world of unrequited women.

But for some intangible reason I found it difficult to asso-

ciate the phenomenon of Rudolph Valentino with the stark 'ribbooo-development' atmosphere of Hollywood (apart from the inevitable realization that anything is possible in this extraordinary corner of the world) At the same time I wondered how long Hollywood will be before it becomes really conscious of his rising double, the ex Black Watch British film star—Bruce Setoo—who has not only Valentino's appearance but his vitality as well We saw him with Harding and Rathbone in "Love from a Stranger"

Against the green lawns of the studio, which were obviously to be filmed as part of a sanatorium park, cameramen led a tape to the face of a "stand in" Incidentally film artists rest or go over their 'lines' during the preliminaries to 'shooting' and the "stand ins" submit to the experiments of the men behind the camera There are usually cables running everywhere, a script girl checking dialogue and costumes, a collection of fawning 'Yes meo' pushing canvas chairs under squat Hebrew directors, and a great deal of movie argot. Even in day time high-powered lights are occasionally used, and these working in conjunction with sun trapping reflectors make a point of showing the GREAT AUDIENCES OF THE WORLD that California is good to people

In this particular 'shooting', a lisping child invalid was to 'wheel-chair' into the legs of a well advertised actress who had become, for these purposes, a nurse After one or two lines of dialogue, the script directed that the actress should wheel the infant girl away I found it interesting to note the difference between the sympathetic warmth of the 'nurse's' expression during the shooting and the subsequent disgust with which she pushed the chair away, following the words "Okay, cut—"

But these scenes are often taken several times and the tension preceding the repetition of previously bungled lines must sink its teeth into the nerves And coupled with this there is the blinding glare of exaggerated lighting

I once met an American ex film star in London He had given acting a good run for its money, but his eyes were streaming constantly, the inevitable toll exacted for his success

"All ready? Ready? Then quiet—"

"Quiet!"

"Quiyet!"

"Qui yet!"

"Turn 'em over . . ."

One of the crew holds a sign before the camera and with a "Scene-two-fifty-four-take two," snaps down a clapper. The camera turns silently for about thirty seconds recording the action occurring within its range. The dialogue is picked up by an over-hanging microphone on a gibbet like arm and is primarily recorded on the side of a separate piece of film.

"Cut!"

"Cut!"

"Cut!"

"Well, what tha——?"

"Do it again—that was *lousy*——!"

The dresser darts out armed with a comb and lightly touches the loose coiffure of the actress who is wriggling her costume back into shape.

"Okay, now quiet, everybody, *please*——"

"Quiet!"

"Quiyet!"

"Qui-yet!"

"Roll 'em . . ."

The "clapper boy" comes out again—

"Scene-two-fifty four take-three!"

The reluctant glimmer on the Channel so far away below the Belgian air liner suggested, through the window at my side, that time also had wings. Yet almost as I slipped the cuff back from my watch those familiar white 'buttresses' slid around the big pneumatic wheel.

England—England, and Dover—

What a stimulating sight! Nothing looks as good as home—we know that—but the soft green orderliness of the very prim fields which were already sliding under the big monoplane—the fine old oaks probably older than the castle they encircled—the disciplined hedges that wound and twisted with the narrow little lanes—the cow or two, and a capped figure with a stick—

All these things were paradoxically crashing my straying nationalism back where I could see it.

Hounds? Yes, by Himmel, there were hounds and a bunt winding home along the ribbon directly below us

"Pink" coats! I thought at once of the last borsemen I had seen on those burning Texas plains

And now, underneath, there were red roofs as well as coats, with red brick houses, and English smoke curling up snugly into the spring air

Why should any man ever try to "get away beyond Brighton" when his heritage was at least a spiritual share in this "plot of land" beneath me

What an "emerald isle" it was I thought of Catalina—that sun lit palm shaded sanctuary in the warm aura of Southern California's Pacific. No—there was of course no possible classification. One was "everything", the other just a minute ocean speck to which I had been an alien, to this other slipping beneath the Fokker I had some claim.

My mind skated round the odd things with which I had identified myself since walking off Southampton dock to cross the Atlantic I thought of that cold Canada and the extreme heat of the Arizona deserts I remembered the dirt around Chicago and the "bumping-off" of "Machine Gun" Kelly—said to have been responsible for the notorious May Day massacre—in that city

And what a welcome had been given me in Yorktown, Virginia, by Mr and Mrs Gary Fletcher Odd that impressions of Havana brought chiefly visions of bright ties and a visit by Bernard Shaw How strange it had been that such a beautiful swimming pool should have been one of the few signs of civilization at that important Columbian port—Buenaventura

Altogether I had trailed twenty five thousand miles since I left England It was a surprising total, a distance, in fact, approximately equal to the circumference of the World

What had I gained? Half an hour ago, perhaps, I shouldn't have realized as fully as I did now But I knew what it was An appreciation of my people? Yes And, what seemed just as important—a better understanding of others in those New Worlds which I had left I could more positively never identify

myself in any way with the band of ignoramuses envisioning Americans as odd specimens liable to wear their hats and check suits into Westminster Abbey saying, "If I like it I'll buy it."

Rather I thought of the immeasurable kindness, hospitality, intelligence and sensitivity of Americans, and considered it a pity that the English cinema goer must see that New World through extraordinary Hollywood. I realized that there wasn't any such animal as the "typical American". How can a person in a country of that size be typically any one thing? To class a Chicago meat packer with a Georgian plantation owner might sound easy, but it's about as excellent a comparison as it would be to liken the people of one side of Europe to the other.

And never would I dismiss South American revolutions in the vein of the London strap-hanger, from whom I once caught the comment "just another 'greaser' circus", in reference to some Latin insurrection. I realized now, the fiery, vital ambitions of those great men in that Southern Continent who, in the case of some countries, are sensitive to the fact that they are "behind", but who, with more than half their country in the grip of fever infested jungles, have an uphill job ahead of them.

Nationalism. Its seed is strong in these Latin Americans so anxious to "catch up".

There are critics of the government in every nation of the world. In some countries of South America where the military heads move figuratively and socially over the same ground as the Government and where education is not sufficiently far reaching to be as appreciated as force, the critics choose the way that they know brings results. Revolution. It's something that the unpatient unenlightened mind can appreciate, warm to, and understand.

To develop the *Oriente* of a country like Ecuador costs money. To bring quick results there must be expeditions to map these unknown jungles and uncover their sources of wealth. After fitting myself out to make the trip that I did into the *Oriente* I often wonder how the immense sum that must be needed to keep men going "in the field" is raised. But expeditions go to the Arctic and the Antarctic Circles and somehow manage to meet expenses. It amazes me.

The air-liner was slowly losing height and I could see Croydon ahead. In a matter of minutes I should be "taking tea and toast" in comfort at an English fireside. Thought of this brought contrasts of *Orient's* discomforts to my mind. I thought of Eric and the last reports of him in New York. According to the final messages he had penetrated into the jungles of the Ssahelas and had not been heard of since "Sparks" usually active radio had been strangely silent——

Completing the half-circle and banking vertically the three-engined Fokker finally levelled out again and its big doughnut wheels touched, with a bump, on Croydon aerodrome

At the official Customs demand that every bag should be opened, I wondered with amusement what appraisal would have been placed on the "grey-haired" shrunken head of some Jibaro "grandmother" which had been offered to me at a "bargain price" in Ecuador

A few days later, a London paper carried the headline:

"BRITON LOST AMONG KILLER TRIBE"

They meant Eric

THE END